

## Tilburg University

### How might appreciative school leadership meet the needs of 21st century schools? An initial inquiry

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# How Might Appreciative School Leadership Meet the Needs of 21st Century Schools? An Initial Inquiry

## **Proefschrift**

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan Tilburg University op gezag van de rector  
magnificus, prof. dr. Ph. Eijlander, in het openbaar te verdedigen ten overstaan van een door  
het college voor promoties aangewezen commissie in de Ruth First zaal van de Universiteit  
op maandag 13 mei 2013 om 14.15 uur

door

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## DEDICATION

In the spirit of Wonder, Inquiry, Learning and Growth ... I wish the same forever and ever for my daughter, Alexis as she continues on her own path ...

*Siempre por Aquellas - Las Bellas - y Las Queridas de mi Vida...*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am appreciative of ...

The patience, support, and encouragement of my wife, Rosalina, and my daughter, Alexis, as they have indulged me this pursuit in making meaning.

The meaningful experiences shared together at CM with Sherry, Aida T., Maribel, Aida Z., and Stacy in the spirit of creating from a simple *Hey! Listen To This!*

The bar that Marge Schiller, as my advisor has set for me, and her advocacy for appreciative practices in education.

The magical way that Rodney Merrill was able to wend my words into something so much more palatable and inviting.

Those who have joined me in the formative learning ventures.

# LOS CINTURONES

By Alana McConnon



We don't accomplish anything in this world alone, and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something.

- Sandra Day O'Connor

We all have our own life to pursue,  
our own kind of dream to be weaving,  
and we all have the power to make wishes come true,  
as long as we keep believing.

- Louisa May Alcott

To work magic is to weave the unseen forces into form; to soar beyond; to explore the uncharted dream realm of the hidden reality.

- Starhawk

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore how Appreciate Leadership might meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools, using the Core Administration Team members of Colegio Maya (2002-2008) the American International School of Guatemala (CM) as a case study. Team members were asked to describe their “high point experiences” as school leaders at CM. This research project enquires into the essence of Appreciative School Leadership and reveals how CM core administrators envision using Appreciative Leadership for the future of schools, while referencing CM.

This study seeks to remedy the current scarcity of research on Appreciative Leadership by exploring successful contextual Appreciative School Leadership practices and seeking to understand the conditions that sustain and extend the application of AL (Appreciative Leadership) in a school environment.

The design methodology is qualitative. Specifically, it is an autoethnographic participant observer case study grounded in the assumptions of social constructionism. Appreciative Inquiry (AI), an action research strategy congruent with social constructionism, orients research toward the study of organizational strengths and successes rather than its deficits and failures.

Participants were guided through an Appreciative Inquiry Team Learning Process using the four stages (Define, Discover, Dream and Design) of a 5-D Appreciative Inquiry. Participants were asked to volunteer for semi-structured interviews and focus groups, and to create documents for cross-validation and triangulation of concepts. A typological data analysis of CM school leaders’ Appreciative School Leadership practices was compiled using the themes and formative ideas of Appreciative Leadership.

The analyzed data revealed that: (1) the process of conducting an Appreciative Inquiry into school leadership resulted in the CM Core Administration Team members feeling empowered in their future work; (2) CM Core Administration Team members had used Appreciative Leadership concepts to create a generative holistic school learning community; (3) the CM Core Administration Team describes optimal leadership strategies for the future that are congruent with Appreciative Leadership; and (4) the CM Core Administration Team recommends that school communities interested in shared school leadership adopt Appreciative Inquiry as the preferred approach/framework (for school leadership). The findings documented a successful Appreciative Leadership inquiry with CM core administration from a set period of time and suggested the grounded ecological conditions needed for the use of Appreciative School Leadership in the future.

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The story is the genesis of all that is human. Societies are stories, as are companies, schools, cities, families and individuals. There are bricks and mortar and flesh and bones, but all of it comes from a story. Even the flesh and bones of one person comes from a story of two people uniting to form another. ~John Steinbach (2005) *What is that "thing" AI is?* AI Listserv.

## A PROLOGUE

When I began teaching in 1981, my goal was to find a small town and to become an active member of the community primarily through my work at the school. I imagined that this would happen in the rural Northeast Kingdom of Vermont in the United States. This, however, was "the road not taken" that Robert Frost talks about in his poem by the same name.

My work as an educator began, instead, as a Peace Corps volunteer in a small rural community in Guatemala. For me, this road was certainly "the one less traveled by" as I had no prior exposure to working in another culture. This experience, however, did allow me to take an active role in the local education system. In my formal role, I worked in small rural schools with students and teachers in an outreach program. I also worked informally within the community with recreational activities and water development projects.

After completing my commitment as a volunteer, I returned to the United States to complete my graduate studies in education. Soon, I was faced once again with deciding where to continue my work as a teacher. I knew that I did not want just any teaching job. I wanted to find another situation where I could make a difference both in school and in the larger community.

The road once again led to Guatemala; but this time to Colegio Maya, the American International School of Guatemala at the outskirts of Guatemala City, a city with more than three million inhabitants. Although a smallish school of 350 students, inclusive of pre K-12, the student body represented more than 30 countries. Similar schools can be found in countries throughout the world. They primarily cater to United States citizens who live in the host country and want to continue an American-based education with an international flavor that embraces the local culture. Schools like Colegio Maya go one step further in embracing a range of cultures from around the world. They open their doors to students from diverse countries who are interested in an American-based education.

While Colegio Maya (CM) models the United States public school, the resemblance ends there. CM is a non-profit school owned and governed by a school board of trustees made up of parents whose children are enrolled in the school. Trustees are elected by the students' parents and, as United States citizens constitute a minority of the student body and of the governing body, the international influence tends to be incorporated throughout the school organization, environment, and its curricula (Brown, 2009). The local culture of the host country is honored and included in the school's curriculum while allowing for the prevailing American and international influences.

For the potential teacher, the international allure of such a school is only the beginning. It also offers opportunities for work *sans* the myriad restrictions and challenges common to school systems in the United States. These include wide variability in early education readiness, social economics, drugs, violence, gender and diversity issues, as well as reams of requirements related to mandated programs such as No Child Left Behind. In

contrast, CM's independence to work collaboratively with families and the ability to focus on child-centered practices is liberating.

I was hired by the director of the school to teach physical education across the grade levels. I was promised small class size, resources, and support to make learning come alive. When I arrived I found that the resources to develop the physical education program, to implement an athletics program and to build a gym were not in place, not forthcoming, not even available.

Further complicating matters, the director who had hired me was dismissed halfway through my first year. There followed a rapid succession of five school directors during my initial four years of working at CM. Despite these four years without strong leadership, I was able develop the physical education and an athletics program and take the gymnasium from fantasy to initial construction. I believe these accomplishments were possible because school leadership kept the project at arm's length and I was able to develop support directly from the immediate school community.

In addition to these projects, we planned and designed a challenge ropes course and an accompanying student leadership program. This project was presented to the school community for their review and received approval to begin.

School leadership turned over yet again and support dissolved. The project was cancelled. With ongoing turmoil throughout the school, I lost confidence that there would be sustainable leadership in the foreseeable future and decided to leave for an American International School in another country.

It was a fruitful process and the goals initially set were achieved; but the years of swimming upstream had taken its toll. I felt that another situation might allow me to rejuvenate personal and professional passions through productive work in an educational community.

## OTRA VEZ (ONCE AGAIN)

It is not often that one has occasion to return to a previous situation, being given a sort of "do-over" to build upon a previous story. After a brief work hiatus in Taiwan, however, I was able to return to Guatemala and CM. During the first two years back at CM, the revolving doors of school leadership continued to spin. One director finished his contract and an interim director took office while two separate search processes were undertaken to find the "right fit" for the job.

It appears that the "glove fit the hand" or the "hand was made to fit the glove" as the subsequent director lead the school successfully for nine years until her retirement. During her tenure, the school received an outstanding accreditation review—in contrast to prior pedestrian ratings. Under this director's leadership, the stakeholders of the school were committed to continuous school improvement and to making a difference in the world; and the school flourished (SACS School Accreditation Report, 2005; NSSE School Renewal Survey, 2007).

I am proud to have been a part of that. During the first year, the director and I had conversations about the school and how to improve it. We quickly discovered that we shared an affinity for reading the latest books in education and business that were creating a "buzz" in their fields; and noted how the two fields often share the same concepts and practices.

Because of these conversations and the work that I previously had done throughout the school, I was selected by a committee of peers to fill a newly created position of Curriculum Facilitator. As Curriculum Facilitator, I was part of the core leadership of the

school. As such, I had an opportunity to observe the intimate workings of the whole school and was better positioned to reflect on effective school organization and leadership. In addition to traditional curriculum coordinator duties, this aptly named position involved becoming immersed in all phases of school life: the school curriculum, climate, and culture, interacting with students and teachers.

As the seasons go through cycles, so has the cycle of leadership at CM. Before the new director arrived, I watched five different directors file through CM. During this newest director's nine-year tenure, I was privileged to witness a life-giving generative style of leadership that saw the school flourish while facing challenges similar to ones that had crushed earlier directors.

Once this director announced that she would retire and a new executive search would begin, the challenges of running the school became heavier and more obvious. CM, it seems to me, began an immediate downturn. Since her retirement, CM has seen three directors in as many years.

## PERO, POR QUE?

This raises a question for me: What happened during those "magical" nine years?

I believe that a key element to the school's success during this period was the director's willingness and ability to engage students, teachers and parents in co-constructing a preferred learning community. Reflecting on these nine years, the weekly Core (Administration) Team meetings stand out as illustrative of the way things were done. These meetings were a primary mechanism for school wide communication and for attending to the varied and emergent issues of school life. Members of the team included the director, the elementary and secondary principals, the school counselor, curriculum facilitator, and the business manager. As the curriculum facilitator, I noticed that participants shared certain expectations: coming to the table committed to placing the student at the center in addressing what is best for student learning, with an inquisitive mind and a sense of purpose, ready to engage in respectful but courageous conversations. We aspired to "best practices" standards rather than relying on personal opinions or personal comfort levels, while always putting student interests and benefit to the fore.

The format and content of the weekly meeting was co-constructed by all of the members as were decisions on the actions needed on the issues brought to the table. Meaning was created through this collaboration, which was carried out into the school. This distributed approach to school leadership contrasts to that of traditional school leadership which is often termed managerial, hierarchical and bureaucratic (Guzman, 1997; Ingram, 1997; Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell, & Caper, 1998; Skrtic, 1991). This traditional approach has been criticized for being dysfunctional, especially in its limited ability to provide a vision for an alternative future (Murphy, 2002). The framing of school leadership by the CM Core Team embraced school improvement with responsibility as moral stewards to build and empower a democratic educational community.

This process is representative of the way most things were done throughout the school at that time. The basic idea of social construction, according to Gergen and Gergen (2004, p. 8), is that "we construct the world" together in the course of everyday life. Normally, we are not even aware that is what we are doing. Things seem to be necessarily as they are.

At these Core Team meetings, we collaborated around a purpose and a vision; and "things are as they are" began to align with "things as they ought to be." The web of



empowering relationships that spanned the school made the preferred possible seem almost inevitable.

## APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

I realize now that the “mysterious force” at play was Appreciate Inquiry (AI). While we never engaged in formal Appreciate Inquiry exercises or officially adopted it as a way of doing or looking at things at CM, the director had some exposure to AI and it showed up in the stance, the bearing and the “culture” of our meetings.

According to Barrett and Fry (2005, p. 23), Appreciative Inquiry can be used in “building cooperative capacity” within organizations. As the director shared her personal library with me, I was captivated by entry-level publications about Appreciative Inquiry. As I learned more about it, I began to understand the work being done at various levels of the school as being aligned with the principles of Appreciative Inquiry.

In my work as Curriculum Facilitator, I began using pieces of Appreciative Inquiry in work with faculty, students and parents. The results from applying Appreciative Inquiry principles were positive and impressive. I had to ask myself, *If casual use of Appreciative Inquiry supports success, why shouldn't it be used throughout the school?*

Further study suggested that AI ideas were being applied in organizational culture and development, leadership, research methods, therapy, and evaluation processes. There was even something called *Appreciative Intelligence*. I found specific examples of Appreciative Inquiry applied to school environments: e.g. strategic planning, school improvement efforts and transformative interventions with schools. I also found some attempts to connect Appreciative Inquiry concepts to pedagogy, instructional design, and teacher preparation. I was surprised to find Appreciative Inquiry in use with a range of education levels, in different parts of the world including, among others, Nepal, Canada, Norway, Palestine, Brazil, Italy, and Great Britain. This new information prompted me to further ask if the flourishing years of CM might be attributed to the AI approach we used at that time; if so, what about it might support the future of CM and other schools?

My intention for this prologue is to provide an orientation to the events and circumstances that prompted this study. It is equally important to me to offer my readers a rationale for selecting the uncommon research methodology and style of presentation that follows. Convention in the modern academic world strongly promotes quantitative research. I chose a qualitative case study methodology. I did so because I believe it best maintains the context of the phenomena being examined, something essentially sacrificed to the operational definition of variables and the filleting of wholes into bits for plotting onto X and Y axes.

In the foreword to Jan Reed’s book (2007), *Appreciative Inquiry: Research for Change*, communications professor Sheila McNamee highlights the importance of using applied research to “generate new knowledge” (p. viii). McNamee also advocates action research that facilitates social transformation by the very process of conducting research. Reed, in her own critical stance, advocates for the use of Appreciative Inquiry creatively and responsively in research for change and notes that it may require a different way of doing research (p. 201).

The reader likely will notice the considerable attention given to “the iterative process” throughout this study. Because of my own background in experiential education, I have learned to value the iterative process. A summary of it appears as Appendix 1: Kolb’s Existential Learning Cycle (1984).

## Prologue

I value the use of inner dialogue in sense making and the search to make things better—from “good to great” as Jim Collins’ (2001) book title aptly phrases it. I have attempted to design a research study that is congruent with my own learning style and uses the process that inspired this study.

The format of this dissertation is to be a blend of styles, utilizing the conventional chapter format (Calabrese, 2006; 2009) along with a more descriptive writing style that still allows for my own voice. The chapter format borrows upon the organization used by Glasgow (2008), Hummel (2007), and San Martin (2008) in their treatment of utilizing Appreciative Inquiry as a theoretical perspective.

A prologue is not customary in dissertations. This prologue, however, is an invitation to the reader to enter into a dialogue aimed at creating an understanding of the impetus for the study and the focus of it: school leadership.

# CHAPTER ONE: ISSUES AND ORIENTATIONS

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In this section, I present issues that I considered important in undertaking this study. They are:

- Education in the 21st Century - Looking toward the Future
- School Leadership
- Social Construction in Education
- Appreciative Inquiry and its Application in Education
- Defining Appreciative Leadership

As the focus of this study does not fit neatly into any one topic heading; these issues will serve as initial background information for this inquiry.

### EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY - LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Historically, education has been thought to be an agent of social change or, at least, a process to provide and prepare for social change (Greene, 1993). Throughout the years, two key questions have been the focus of the field of education: "What should be taught?" and "How should it be taught?" (Bennett & LeCompte, 1990; Bruner, 1977; 1996; Dewey, 1930). In 2008, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), a highly respected organization in education, constructed a position statement entitled *Educating Students in a Changing World*, which stated:

As educators in the 21st century, we are charged with educating students to be successful in a complex, interconnected world. This responsibility requires schools to prepare students for ongoing technological, cultural, economic, informational and demographic changes.

ASCD (2009) supports changes in teaching, learning and leadership that adequately prepare students for the 21st century who:

- Acquire and apply core knowledge and critical-thinking skill sets that are essential in an information age.
- Demonstrate creativity, innovation, and flexibility when partnering with business and community members to advance common goals.
- Make decisions and solve problems ethically and collaboratively.
- Use technology to gather, analyze and synthesize information for application in a global economy.
- Exhibit positive interpersonal relationships that value multiple languages, cultures and all persons.
- Display leadership skills that inspire others to achieve, serve, and work together.

While the position statement acknowledges the need to accommodate change and presents some ideas on what will be needed to meet the challenges of the 21st century, the statement does

not answer the key “what?” and “how?” questions. ASCD’s publications overflow with proposals in this era while public consensus is being sought (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010).

In its Whole Child Initiative, ASCD (2012) recognizes that academic achievement is but “one element concerned with student learning”; a comprehensive approach is needed to address the myriad factors that support the development of the whole child as a life-long learner. Attention to academics alone will not ensure the call for children who are “healthy, knowledgeable, motivated, civically inspired, engaged in the arts, prepared for work and economic self-sufficiency, and ready for the world beyond their own borders” (ASCD, 2009).

In the 21st century, questions about what should be taught and how are still pertinent—especially given the challenges of rapid change; yet, they are still wanting for public agreement. The advent of a global economy, an information explosion, ever shifting demographics and a technology revolution that stretches into the foreseeable future all raise a multitude of issues related to education that will require students to possess 21st century skills (Scherer, 2009). While the key questions remain the same, the complexity of providing the answers has grown. Addressing change and envisioning the future is a new constant in education.

### SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Consideration of the following questions is critical to the educational process: (1) Who makes the decisions regarding what will be taught and how it will be taught? (2) Who will guide the process once these questions have been answered? Once a vision for the future has been set for a school, it is up to the leaders of the school to chart the path and lead the stakeholders (students, parents, and teachers) towards the set goals. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) emphasize that “leadership is ... vital to the successful functioning of a school” and that “traditions and beliefs in schools are no different from those regarding leadership in other institutions” (p. 6). Effective leadership is important to the development of an effective school.

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of studies of school leadership as practiced by school principals to explore possible relationships between school leadership and student achievement. Sixty-nine studies were examined covering the years between 1978 to 2001 that involved a total of 2,802 schools and an estimated number of 14,000 teachers and 1.4 million students. In broad terms, the study indicated that school leadership can have a profound effect on the achievement of students. Twenty-one specific behaviors (responsibilities) related to school leadership were identified (Appendix 2). The authors noted that while school leadership needs to attend to all of the twenty-one responsibilities, they found that the ability of the school leadership to select the right work is a critical aspect of effective leadership in continuous school improvement. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty recommend that school leadership needs to be attuned to the needs and context of a given school and to use a site-specific approach.

Thomas R. Hoerr (2005), speaking about leading a school, stated:

Good leaders change organizations; great leaders change people. People are at the heart of any organization, particularly a school, and it is only through changing people – nurturing and challenging them, helping them grow and develop, creating a culture in which they all learn—that an organization can flourish. Leadership is about relationships (p. 7).

Leadership is a key variable in the evolution of a school as it seeks to meet present day challenges and to improve its organizational effectiveness in providing effectual student learning. According to Klimek, Ritzenhein, and Sullivan (2008), “Effective leadership for the 21st century needs to be more multidimensional. It must focus on relationships and interdependencies within every organization” (p. viii). Schools resemble living systems and those schools seeking to be effective in the 21st century will require leadership that attends to them as such (Klimek, Ritzenhein, & Sullivan, 2008; Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2000).

## SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION IN EDUCATION

While there are ample challenging questions about the focus of education, perhaps just as important is the tack, stance and perspective from which these questions are approached and answered. (How will power be distributed? Who will be involved? How will meaning be made?)

The basic premise of social constructionism is that together “we construct the world” (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 7). Accordingly, collaborative actions define a reality that is sustained through a dynamic ongoing process of continuing to act upon interpretations and knowledge *as if* these are dictated by the way things are innately.

Taking a social constructionist posture on education “... offers a new way of understanding existing educational practices and opens the door to new ranges of possibility” (Gergen, 2001). It is common, for example, for social constructionists to promote polyvocality, the practice of hearing and honoring all stakeholders, to include and engage those classically excluded from the decision-making process in education. Dialogue is encouraged among all involved, especially as a means of gaining awareness of inherent situational biases (Freire, 1970; Gergen & Gergen, 2004). In his book *Relational Being*, Ken Gergen (2009b) links excellence in education with excellence in relationships—between and among the students, teachers and staff, classrooms, and the world outside. He states:

When education focuses on relationships as opposed to individuals, we enter a new world of possibility. Our concern shifts from what is taking place “within minds,” to our life together. And within this space of collaborative meaning-making, we can appreciate our multiple traditions and their various potentials. Further, we can ask about the kind of world we wish to create for the future – both locally and globally. When education is sensitive to relationship, we realize that in terms of future well-being, “we are all in it together.” (p. 269)

Taking on a social constructionist view of meaning-making can open the door to possibilities of educational practices that are creative, collective and congruent with local truth and realities.

In his paper, “Social Constructionism and Pedagogical Practices,” Ken Gergen (2001) notes the plethora of traditional practices that continue to influence education. Gergen recognizes that social constructionism may lend support to many forms of these practices as well as providing opportunities for new practices with an alternative epistemology. Embracement of social constructionism in education practices, according to Gergen (2001), will allow for the social construction of knowledge. Exciting possibilities include: (a) Truth may be created in community which may continue to re-create the truth according to the polyvocality and relationships present; (b) A non-hierarchical authority of knowledge that may grow from contextual learning situations, rather than a top-down model of instruction/direction; (c) Disciplines of knowledge may be crossed as learners construct their meaning from investigations and collaborative practices; (d) Multiple pedagogies of appreciation and critique may be utilized toward reflexive deliberation to forge a link between disparate groups; and (e) Knowledge does not reside only in individual minds, but also in generative relationships.

In addition to pedagogical practices, social construction also may be used as an umbrella to engage the whole school organization in bringing the various stakeholders together to join the making of reality, explore limits and create new visions together (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). This is where Social Constructionism informs Appreciative Inquiry in providing a mechanism where “the future is open to the dialogues that will follow” (Gergen, 2001, p. 21).

## APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AND ITS APPLICATION IN EDUCATION

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a model of change management (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). AI also is described as a strengths-based, capacity building approach to transforming human systems (Barrett & Fry, 2005). AI has been recognized further as an approach to organizational analysis and learning (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008). In *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change*, Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) tie it together this way:

AI theory states that organizations are centers of human relatedness, first and foremost, and relationships thrive where there is an appreciative eye – when the people see the best in one another, share their dreams and ultimate concerns in affirming ways, and are connected in full voice to create not just new worlds but better worlds. (p. 61)

Whether a model, an approach, a framework, a perspective, a stance, or a theory, Appreciative Inquiry “is a constructive, generative, and capacity building mode of action-research in which inquiry, learning, and change are seen as a related, integral whole” (Barrett & Fry, 2005, p. 36).

Appreciative Inquiry has been used in many and varied forms and applications. It has been used to build capacity in the private and public business, health, and education sectors; in the practice of law, medicine, theology, life coaching, and therapy; and in community building and development work at local, national, and global levels. Threads of an appreciative stance have extended to formal work in areas of Appreciative Sharing of Knowledge (Thatchenkery, 2005), Appreciative Intelligence (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006), Appreciative Living (Kelm, 2005), the Appreciative Organization (Anderson, Cooperrider, Gergen, K., Gergen, M., McNamee, Watkins, & Whitney, 2008), the Appreciative Inquiry Summit (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr, & Griffin, 2003), Research (Reed, 2007), Appreciative Team Building (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney, & Fry, 2004), and Appreciative Leadership (Bushe, 2006; Ricchiuto, 2005; Schiller, Holland, & Riley, 2001; Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, 2010). The applications for the principles of Appreciative Inquiry seem boundless.

Within education, Appreciative Inquiry has also been adapted to a variety of functions and purposes. Among these have been work on school improvement – typically involving strategic planning (Adams, Samuelson, Willoughby, 2002; Cooperrider & Pratt, 2001; Morris, Schiller, Stavros, & Morotta, 2002; Stetson & Miller, 2003; Szecey, 2002; Willoughby & Samuels, 2009); research into teacher preparation (Harkess, 2004), Appreciative Instructional Design Model (Norum, 2000), AI and transformative learning (Wood, 2006), AI and experiential education (Ricketts & Willis, 2001), Appreciative Pedagogy (Conklin, 2009; O'Connor & Yballe, 2007; Yballe & O'Connor, 2004; 2000), AI and teacher perceptions (Glasgow, 2008; Holman, 2004; Hummel, 2007), and leadership through Appreciative Inquiry (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003). Additionally, reflections upon the use and impact of AI in schools has been shared (Luth-Hanssen, Hauger, & Nesje, 2007; Nesje, 2007). This is only a sampling of the ways the “art of appreciation” (Barrett & Fry, 2005) and the appreciative stance have been applied in educational environs to discover, to revalue and to build capacity.

Appreciative Inquiry seems particularly appropriate for change within education because its aims and benefits correspond with the challenges faced in education. Appreciative Inquiry entails focusing on what is most valuable, vitalizing and vibrant in a human system (Barrett & Fry, 2005). When leadership adopts an appreciative stance—an extension of Appreciative Inquiry which is represented by the application of the five principles of Appreciative Inquiry (Appendix 3; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, pp. 49-53) in organizational practices—results may be powerful. Reality and truth is co-created (Constructionist Principle). A focus is on that which is desired (Poetic Principle). Transformation begins with the asking of an unconditional positive question (Simultaneity Principle). Positive images promote positive futures (Anticipatory Principle). A

positive core of capacity expands and grows (Positive Principle). An appreciative stance asks us to value collective intelligence and to promote procedures that empower multiple stakeholders to construct positive realities that serve a common purpose. "AI is inherently about creating learning relationships that are generative," which is a fit for employing an appreciative stance in addressing education (Barrett & Fry, 2005, p. 95). In addition to being used as a situational intervention strategy, Appreciative Inquiry may be an over-arching organizational approach (an appreciative culture).

## DEFINING APPRECIATIVE LEADERSHIP

The work of Schiller, Holland, and Riley (2001); and Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, and Rader (2010) have been seminal and defining in Appreciative Leadership (AL).

Schiller et al. (2001) state that "Appreciative Leadership is more than an individual leadership style; it is a method and practice" (p. 2). Based on their investigations and the resulting Model of Appreciative Leadership (Appendix 4), they conclude that the following themes exemplify Appreciative Leadership:

Theme 1: Leaders are belief-based with an explicit spiritual orientation and practice.

Theme 2: Leadership lives in the group and not in any one person.

Theme 3: Multiple truths exist in ways of thinking, doing and being.

Theme 4: Appreciative Leaders have an unwavering commitment to bringing out the best in themselves and others.

Theme 5: Appreciative Leaders find generative forces in their many circumstances and multiple systems (pp.162-167).

Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, and Rader (2010) assert that "Appreciative Leadership is a philosophy, a way of being, and a set of strategies that give rise to practices applicable across industries, sectors, and arenas of collaborative actions" (p. 3). Their view of AL encompasses four formative ideas:

1. AL is about relational capacity;
2. AL is a positive worldview;
3. AL turns potential into positive power; and,
4. AL sets positive ripples in motion.

Whitney et al., define Appreciative Leadership as "... the relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power—to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance—to make a positive difference in the world" (p. 3, 2010).

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to *Common Core: State Standards Initiative*, schools are expected to prepare students so as to be successful for the future (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). However, given the rapid rate of change in the modern world, it is not clear what the future will be like or what is needed to prepare students for it, especially considering both academic and non-academic concerns among diverse stakeholder groups. School leadership is expected to chart a sure course and lead the school community toward this nebulous future or even conflicting possible futures. At the same time, school leaders may not be empowered to make the necessary decisions, or they may be hampered by an organizational and leadership structure that is not compatible with the needs of the situation. This explains the modern call for a more generative kind of school organization with a leadership structure that is able to engage its community in effectively determining appropriate goals and objectives and a

means for working collaboratively towards achieving them (Eades, 2008; Glasser, 1990; Klimek et al., 2008; Senge et al., 2000). Despite this apparent need, there is a paucity of research in this area. This likely because applications in specific schools have been limited and even less formally studied.

Appreciative Inquiry has served successfully as a tool for strategic planning and school improvement work (Adamson, Samuels & Willoughby, 2002; Arronson, Arsht, & Griffin, 2003; Arcoleo, 2003; Bergevin & Peletier, 2003; Davis, 2006; Evans, 2003; Henry, 2005; Hinrichs, 2002b; Morris, Schiller, Stavros, & Morotta, 2002; Mohr, 2003; Nesje & Nesje, 2003; Stetson, 2007; Torres & Weisenberger, 2001). Gradually, educational professionals have extended the appreciative approach to other potentially beneficial applications in education

Though some inquiry has been made into the make-up of Appreciative Organizing (Anderson et al., 2008; Barrett, 1995; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2004) and Appreciative Leadership (Bushe, 2005, Schiller, Riley, & Holland, 2001; Ricchiuto, 2005; Whitney, 2008; Whitney et al., 2010), neither of these has been fully investigated formally in their application within schools. Some investigators (Avital & Boland, 2008; Hosking, 2002; Mantel & Ludema, 2004; Whitney, 2007; Whitney, 2009) have begun exploring the symbiotic relationship between a socially constructionist epistemology and organizational design and leadership that is oriented toward a sustaining positive change, with initial forays into applying these to education (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005; Hinrichs, Rhodes-Yenowine, & Schiller, 2003; Klimek et al., 2008; McNamee, 2006; Senge et al., 2000; Simpkins, 2009).

This case study seeks to inquire, using the reflections of the CM Core Administration Team members, into practices of Appreciative Leadership at the CM school during its golden period and to ask what would be necessary for these critical success factors to continue. My intention is for the entire inquiry to be congruent with Appreciative Inquiry and social constructionist thought. As an action research strategy, AI is my theoretical perspective as well as my research methodology, i.e. it is an Appreciative Inquiry into Appreciative School Leadership. AI has begun to bloom as a research methodology in its research use in examining various issues in K-12 schools (Bryant, 2012; Govender, & Edwards, 2009; Henderson, 2008; Jordan, & Thatchenkery, 2011; Kozik, P. L., Cooney, B., Vinciguerra, S., Gradel, K., & Black, J., 2009; Williams, 2011) and issues in higher education (Calabrese, 2012; Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012; Giles & Kung, 2010; Robbins, F. V. T., 2012). For this study in combining AI as my theoretical perspective and action research strategy, I used as examples the studies of Glasgow (2008), Hummel (2007), and San Martin (2008).

According to Stratton-Berkessel (2010), in an Appreciative Inquiry, "mental models, belief systems, values, motivations, hopes and dreams are shared through stories of success." In effect, by conducting an Appreciative Inquiry, my study not only seeks to understand Appreciative School Leadership at CM, but also serves as a model for Appreciative School Leadership, while concurrently building organizational capacity.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore how CM Core Administration Team members depict their high point experiences as school leaders, to discover practices that contribute to Appreciative Leadership and to portray Appreciative School Leadership at CM. My study provided how CM core administrators visualized their dreams and design for employing Appreciative Leadership for the future of CM.



## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There is a paucity of research and literature on Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership in educational settings. I intend this work to make a contribution toward improving this situation. I also hope it will contribute to the practice and profession of educational leadership in several areas: (a) a focus on effective contextual school leadership practices; (b) the examination of school leadership and school organizing together; (c) the identification and benefits of Appreciative Leadership specific to a school; and (d) the use of an appreciative tool to examine appreciative practices while building the capacity of school leaders.

The design of this study is distinctive in that the context of Appreciative Leadership is examined, data is obtained through an evolving iterative process, and the research process is transformative for the participants involved. The study is itself an example of Appreciative Inquiry and, therefore, instructive of an available option for school leadership that is multidimensional, is based on an appreciative stance and is appropriate for addressing the fluxing challenges of the 21st century.

## OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

This qualitative case study was grounded in social constructionism (Gergen, 2009) employing an Appreciative Inquiry as the theoretical perspective and the framework for conducting the research. Social constructionist concepts key to this study were: “(1) the ways in which we describe and explain the world are outcomes of relationships; (2) constructions gain their significance from their social utility; and (3) as we describe and explain, so do we fashion our future” (Gergen, 2009).

I chose Appreciative Inquiry as a methodology “that takes social construction of reality to its positive extreme” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) in its affirmative approach to cooperative capacity building. The use of an AI process is congruent with the context within which the case is being studied, while also a fresh approach to education. While it is often highlighted as a tool for organizational development, Reed (2007) advocates for the innovative use of Appreciative Inquiry as a research framework in connecting the aims of research and building capacity within human systems.

The focus for this study was on exploring the generative aspects of practicing Appreciative Leadership at CM by the Core Administration Team. The five members of the school’s Core Administrative Team undertook an Appreciative Inquiry by participating in the first four phases of the 5-D cycle in a Team Learning Process (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr, & Griffin, 2003; Mohr & Watkins, 2001). The four phases that the participants were guided through were define, discovery, dream, and design.

Participants were involved in the following *iterative data collection* methods: (a) semi-structured interviews; (b) focus groups; and (c) participant created documents to support cross-validation and triangulation. Participants were guided through the four stages of the AI cycle in an emergent fashion following the line of inquiry as new directions of discovery emerged. For the purpose of this study, the fifth stage of the AI process, Destiny, was omitted. Chapter Three provides a more details on the methodology.

## UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The unit of analysis was the CM Core Administrative Team, which consisted of the general school director, elementary and secondary principals, business manager and school counselor that worked together from 2002 to 2008. This group was selected based on my observation of school

performance as Curriculum Facilitator and an ex officio member of the Core Administrative Team during this time. Data was collected using the iterative devices described above.

### DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed using typological content analysis, open and axial coding, and pattern matching to categorize and synthesize concepts as well as examine emerging themes from the interrelationships of the words and concepts. I analyzed data by becoming familiar with all the data as a set and the emerging identified categories and themes as related to the research questions posed. Typological categories were established based on information drawn from a review of the Appreciative Leadership literature. Themes were identified through coding and pattern matching. Literal narrative descriptions were provided by the participants and captured as data.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following question guided my study: What is the value of Appreciative School Leadership? Webster's Online Dictionary defines 'value' as "the quality that renders something valuable or desirable" (Webster's Online Dictionary, 2012). Based upon this definition, I determined to explore the qualities of Appreciative Leadership that render it valuable in the operation of the school.

To date, most of the concepts of Appreciative Leadership have been presented in scholarly literature – with most examples drawn from the business sector. However, the application of Appreciative Leadership in schools has not been thoroughly or formally explored. To begin to redress this situation, this study asked the following research questions:

1. As members of the CM Core Administration Team from 2002 to 2008 describe their effective high point leadership experiences, are these consistent with established formal Appreciative Leadership concepts?
2. How do the members of the CM Core Administration Team describe their dreams for leading while using Appreciative Leadership strategies in the future?
3. How do members of the CM Core Administration Team describe the ecological conditions necessary for the use of Appreciative Leadership?

### OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To recognize the practices of Appreciative School Leadership.
2. To identify necessary ecological conditions for Appreciative School Leadership to be effectively utilized and sustained.

### LIMITATIONS

This study had the following limitations:

1. This study was limited by the participants' knowledge of Appreciative Leadership.

2. A positive bias is inherent to Appreciative Inquiry process and is reflected throughout the study.
3. Some participants in the study were no longer working together; memories and the feeling of esprit de corps may have altered with the passage of time. Participants' construction of the story and its meanings may have changed.
4. Being a researcher who was a former colleague of members of the AI study team presented issues of permeability. Eliminating me in favor of another interviewer might have altered the dynamic in an entirely different way. We discussed the boundaries between researcher and cultural member. Mindfulness was always necessary in the design of the study and during the collection and analysis of data.
5. Because the study was conducted in a small, independent school, the findings may not apply to educational structures substantially variant from this case.

## DELIMITATIONS

This study concerns the Core Administrative Team that worked together during the period of 2002 to 2008 at CM in the interests of conducting research within an intimate contextual single case study.

## ASSUMPTIONS

The study rests on the following assumptions:

1. During 2002 to 2008, CM was on many accounts very successful. (SACS School Accreditation Report, 2005; NSSE School Renewal Survey, 2007).
2. During this time period, the CM Core Administrative Team members unknowingly practiced Appreciative Leadership that contributed to the school's success.
3. CM Core Administrative Team members had high point experiences in leading that they can recall from this period.
4. CM Core Administrative Team members can describe optimal conditions for leading the school and can suggest a design for utilizing Appreciative Leadership to support this goal.

## STATEMENT OF RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE

As indicated in the narrative Prologue, I come to this study with high regard for a learning community that develops its collective intelligence, engages in courageous conversations; allows the freedom to ask the important questions and pursue the answers; identifies purposeful work towards a meaningful shared goal, supports personal leadership development while valuing shared leadership; and aspires to efficient and enjoyable teamwork. Based on seven years of working closely with other members of the CM Core Administration Team, I firmly believe that they shared these values. Because students always held center stage, we were mutually empowered to seek what we thought was best for student learning. Together, despite limited foreknowledge of Social

Constructionism, Appreciative Inquiry or Appreciative Leadership, we worked to cultivate a positive core in the school, beginning amongst ourselves and carrying it outward through our community of students, parents and faculty.

I found it challenging at times to separate the relationship of leadership with the organizational development of the school. Ineluctable and inextricably intertwined, they were examined as they were found. As I had been a part of creating the core, it is important that I use this perspective to make sense of the phenomena, while being ever vigilant for personal bias and ever candid about it.

It is important to mention I have placed high value on “congruence” as I have organized the focus and design of this study to take advantage of my strengths as an experiential learning facilitator. In choosing social constructionism and Appreciative Inquiry, I have chosen a worldview and framework congruent with the values that I associate with experiential learning. They are:

- The learning that takes place during this study, mine, the participants’ and ours together all follow the on-going steps of the Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle that engages the participants holistically and strongly emphasizes the importance of reflexivity.
- The process for constructing the learning and knowledge is done together taking advantage of the benefits of group (team) dynamics and includes a desire by all involved to make a positive difference.
- The participants are professionally active in the context being examined.
- Iterative steps were taken throughout the research process to ensure adherence to the Latin *congruo* meaning, “I meet together, I agree” in including the members in this examination of school Appreciative Leadership.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS & CONCEPTS

The following definitions clarify how terms are used herein. The definitions provided are ample in providing description of the each term’s meaning as well as the relationship to the process it is used.

### **SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM**

In the Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology (2010), Ken Gergen states that social constructionism refers to a tradition of scholarship that traces the origin of knowledge, meaning, or understanding to human relationships. Gergen also shares that social constructionism may serve as a perspective which believes that human life exists the way it does due to social and interpersonal influences (1985). For the purpose of this study, a social construction(ist) perspective is utilized in exploring the topic of appreciate school leadership by using an Appreciative Inquiry methodology. Social constructionism sets the stage for exploring the concept of Appreciative School Leadership as practiced by the CM core team.

### **APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY**

AI is a positive, strengths-based, participatory methodology (principles, practices, and procedures). Appreciative Inquiry is a philosophy—a way of being in the world, as well as a practice—a way of doing in the world (Stratton-Berkessel, 2010). As described by Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros (2003),

Appreciative Inquiry (also referred to as AI) is a form of transformational inquiry that selectively seeks to locate, highlight, and illuminate the life-giving forces of an

organization's existence. It is based on the belief that human systems are made and imagined by those who live and work within them (p. xiii).

### **RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST THEORY TO APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY**

The over-arching theory for Appreciative Inquiry is social constructionist theory. The central premise of AI is that the appreciative process of knowing is socially constructed (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005, p. 13). As participants come together to participate in an Appreciative Inquiry, they determine their own reality through the act of dialogue in the interest of capacity building in a positive context. While not held as ultimate truths, the resulting interpretations from the action research process of AI may provide a conceptual meaning system of a culture that may influence social action.

### **AN APPRECIATIVE STANCE**

An *appreciative stance*, synonymous with appreciative approach, is a philosophical position taken in addressing the situation at hand and is based on the principles of Appreciative Inquiry. Working from the positive core, "solving the problem" is not the focus or the point. Rather, energy is directed toward discovery and appreciation of the inherent best qualities and strengths of persons and relationships and carrying these forward to an envisioned future. Minimal or no time and energy is spent on what has not worked in the past. Dialogue is used to generate increased understanding and support for tapping available strengths and resources to work towards what should be. In addition, the term *appreciative stance* describes employing the principles of Appreciative Inquiry within a relatively new area of focus that has not yet been formally detailed or defined. The principles of Appreciative Inquiry that support an appreciative stance are: (1) the Constructionist Principle; (2) the Simultaneity Principle; (3) the Poetic Principle; (4) the Anticipatory Principle; and (5) the Positive Principle (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, pp. 49-53).

Appreciative Leadership is defined in this study by the formal concepts established by Schiller et al. (2001) and Whitney et al (2010). The roots of AL stem from the overarching theory of Appreciative Inquiry in the appreciative practice of leadership. For this study, working definition of Appreciative Leadership is "the relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power – to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance – to make a positive difference in the world" (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, 2010).

### **CAPACITY BUILDING**

The definition of Capacity Building as used in this study is "the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes in individuals and groups of people relevant in the design, development and maintenance of institutional and operational infrastructures and processes that are locally meaningful (Groot, R. & van der Molen, P., 2001). Positive potential is amplified. The capacity building intention of this study was two-fold: (1) the capacity building and empowerment of the participants, and (2) the exploration of building capacity in education through the use of Appreciative Leadership.

### **POSITIVE CORE**

Forefront thinkers and authors of Appreciative Inquiry, Cooperrider, Barrett, Fry, Hammond, Mohr, Srivasta, Stavros, Watkins, and Whitney as well as subsequent authors of AI recognize the importance of identifying the positive core of a system. The term refers to the shared

meaning of the best of people, in their organizations, and the world around them. It is the good in people and their exceptionality – their unique gifts, strengths, and qualities. It consists of the life-giving forces (ideas, beliefs, or values) that contribute to the stakeholders and community being alive, effective, successful and connected in healthy ways. All together, these are a base for building capacity through innovation and growth in conducting an Appreciative Inquiry.

### GENERATIVITY

Throughout this study use of the word and its derivative, generative, are made in association of terms such as generative planning, learning, and leadership. *Generativity* is a term first coined by psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (1963) “to denote a concern for establishing and guiding the next generation” (p. 267). Said another way, it refers to people giving back and taking care of their community and world (Kotre, 2012). As used in this study, the term also suggests *generative potency*, a term used by Gergen (1978) for the capacity to challenge prevailing assumptions. When we suggest that Appreciative Leadership is *generative* we mean that “they are intent on bringing to light new possibilities for action and growth” (Klimek, Ritzenhein & Sullivan, 2008).

### ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

*Prologue* invites the reader to participate in the story of this project and the work that brought it into existence.

*Chapter One* provides the context and background to the study, the problem statement, purpose of the study, significance of the study, overview of methodology, unit of analysis, data analysis, research questions, objectives, limitations, delimitations, assumptions, statement of researcher’s perspective, and definition of key terms.

*Chapter Two* explains the conceptual and theoretical frameworks and how they apply to the study. I provide a review of literature that includes a synthesis of the empirical research found to be related to the study.

*Chapter Three* reveals the details of the research design and methodology, my role as researcher, data collection methods, and data analysis.

*Chapter Four* presents the data analysis and addresses measures that assure the quality of the research.

*Chapter Five* contains a discussion of the findings, implications for future research, recommendations for praxis, relationship of findings to relevant theory, significance of the study, and summary and conclusions.

Finally, *Epilogue* provides a semantic link for the reader of this research study.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is a review of the literature related to my study. The review consists of (a) the conceptual framework that includes discussion of epistemology as related to my professional educational experiences and theoretical orientation; (b) a competing perspective; (c) methodology for the empirical research; and (d) a review and synthesis of the relevant empirical research.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study stems from social constructionist epistemology, personal and professional experience, and the theoretical perspectives of Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership. This section shows how I approach my study to examine the Appreciative Leadership practices of the Colegio Maya (CM) Core Administration Team.

### EPISTEMOLOGY

My study draws from a social constructionist epistemology. In exploring social construction further, I find the work of Kenneth Gergen invaluable. The basic proposition of social constructionism is that *we construct the world* through our relationships, interactions and dialogue as we continuously seek to make sense of the world (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 8). Our understandings have no necessary link to *what there is*; rather, what we “know” arises from our relational use of language (in the broadest sense of language) as we attempt to describe and explain the world (Gergen, 2009) to each other. In the process, we fashion our future; innovating through an ongoing process of meaning making, we open up certain possibilities and close off others. The sense making and sense giving process in relationships generate new meanings and offer new possibilities for action.

Kenneth Gergen (2009a) highlights the need for each of us to consider how we make our own meaning of the world—which depends upon the social relationships of which we are a part. It is from our social relationships—not bound by history or tradition if we so choose, that we construct the world. Gergen & Gergen (2004) notes that the future is ours to create together, “as we speak together, listen to new voices, raise questions, ponder alternative metaphors, and play at the edges of reason, cross the thresholds into new worlds of meaning” (p. 12). Gergen (2009a) offers the following five central assumptions of social construction of which I provide brief connections to the study at hand:

1. The way in which we understand the world is not required by *what there is*. We may use our language to construct alternative worlds.

*The CM Core Administration Team used the literal mechanism of a round table at which to gather and to ask “What is best for student learning?” Each person sought to create and share the best answer together. This mechanism was replicated figuratively as well throughout the school with various stakeholder groups.*

2. The ways in which we describe and explain the world are the outcomes of relationship.

*In “sitting together at the round table,” the sharing was a product of the roles and responsibilities of everyone working together.*

3. Constructions gain their significance from their social utility.

*With “What is best for student learning?” central to conversations, the social utility is key to school function.*

4. As we describe and explain, so do we fashion our future. Sustaining traditions requires a continuous process of regenerating meaning together, which is a challenge in a world of rapid global change.

*The coming together was a regularly scheduled event, as well as an event for ‘on-call’ as needs arose. Common understandings were first sought in discussions followed by the expectation of generativity to address the piece at the center of the table.*

5. Reflection on our taken-for-granted worlds is vital to our future well-being. (pp. 5-12)

*In seeking common understanding, practices at the table by the participants always included individual and group reflection.*

Gergen believes that critical reflection may lead to increased sensitivity to traditional biases from the mainstream culture. If so, a social constructionist orientation encourages a wide-ranging sensitivity to the nature of truth claims and a sense of release from their limits. As Gergen and Gergen (2004) note, “It is when people can see the limits and biases inherent in the otherwise taken for granted that they are freed to consider alternatives” (p. 29). Throughout his address on the utility of social construction in qualitative inquiry, Kenneth Gergen (2003) stresses that knowledge is socially constructed. He states, “from the constructionist position the process of understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship” (p. 15). As such, a social constructionist orientation allows for alternative constructions of greater promise. Gergen (2009a, 2009b) has shown how a social constructionist stance can be applied to meaning making activities in organizations with a focus on collaborative decision making and relational leadership.

In examining social constructionist epistemology, Warmoth (2000) highlighted the proposition that knowledge is ultimately grounded in conversations among members of communities. Fundamental to this has been the study of the sociology of knowledge by Kuhn (1970) in his recognition of *paradigm shifts* that open up new ways for understanding. Berger and Luckmann (1966) in *The Social Construction of Reality* noted that people interacting in groups in a social system over time reciprocal form habitual behaviors that are acted out in day-to-day relationships and become institutionalized into a socially constructed reality. Using social constructionist epistemology is congruent with the phenomena being examined in this study as the CM Core Administration Team members are asked to consider the school leadership that they had created. It is also congruent with my own professional experiences and the use of Appreciative Inquiry with Appreciative Leadership as the extended theoretical perspective which is presented in the subsequent sections.



## PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

My professional educational experiences of thirty-plus years are congruent with a social constructionist epistemology and influence the topic of investigation and the methodology I have chosen. While studying to become a physical education teacher and athletic coach, I was initially interested in individual physical performance with transference to team performance. I examined the factors and complexities that contribute to team performance, exploring psychology of sport with a special focus on the “flow” experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). While studying pedagogy in the teacher preparation program, I gained respect for the “experiential learning” model as developed by John Dewey (1997, 1916), Kurt Lewin (1951), and David Kolb (1984). Experiential learning is useful in providing an education that is relevant and meaningful while full of active shared reflection and application of what is learned (Appendix 1). This constructivist understanding served as the base for my educational practices in facilitating active student learning through guided discovery.

Building on experience as a teacher and coach, I moved from sport and physical education to becoming a facilitator of learning through development of experiential learning teams. I could use more complex approaches to involve participants in their own efforts to learn, grow, and build capacity. This has informed my work as Curriculum Facilitator and as a leader in an educational community where we collaboratively decide *what we learn, how we learn and how we know that we have learned*. As a member of the CM Core Administration Team, I was responsible for sharing research-based best practices for delivering classroom instruction. In that capacity, I proffered the social constructionist view. University of Calgary Associate Professor Dan Wulff (2009) eloquently states the benefits of a social constructionist take on the world:

Social constructionists live and breathe in the world, take positions, make decisions, make differences. So of course we act in the world, but an important distinction may be that social constructionists tend to be ready, willing, and able to appreciate alternative positions or even to shift positions if warranted. With an appreciation of multiple possible viewpoints and positions, the need to be locked into one best or true choice is unnecessary and at times quite unhelpful. We take preferred positions, but with new information or new contexts, we can re-evaluate and adjust.

Besides designing and carrying out our strategic plan, the CM Core Administration Team was responsible for meeting the daily challenges of running the school. I did influence the team to work in an appreciative style. My role was to ask the apt and necessary questions that prompted us to consider possibilities, despite established ways of working, encouraging the group to engage in collective thinking even while remaining open to diverse viewpoints. I often used experiential exercises to open us to creative thinking in addressing current challenges and in generative planning to create an optimal student learning environment. Considered a 21<sup>st</sup> Century postmodern tool for strategic planning, generative planning emphasizes generativity for a broad-based group in producing something, learning by doing, trying it out and reflecting on the process and outcome (Bergquist, 2010).

Based on my experiences in education, I subscribe to certain core beliefs about “enlightened” school leadership and those beliefs underpin this work. They include:

1. Schools want to improve and make a difference in the world through the education they provide. A *can do* attitude can do wonders.
2. Research-based *best practices* are readily available and should be at the *center of the table* with what is best for student learning when deciding on school improvement actions. This implies that stakeholders are heard yet eager to reach consensus in learning together as an organization.

3. Educational issues are not separate from the rest of life and should be examined holistically—considering physical, mental, emotional/spiritual, and social issues for all involved.
4. Optimal individual and team performance is valued. Each individual possesses strengths that serve as potential for growth. As each individual grows and contributes to the team, the capacity of the whole group grows as well. Important intangibles such as the development of collective intelligence and the synergy of teamwork also contribute to building capacity.
5. A school is a complex living system and should be organized and administered as such. A cohesive system is required so that all members of the educational community understand operations. It is especially important that compatible leadership supports the established system.
6. Lao Tzu best sums up the spirit of leadership in the statement: *To lead people, walk beside them ... As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. When the best leader's work is done, the people say, "We did it ourselves!"* Traditional school systems often believe in this type of leadership yet are organized in a way that does not support collaborative governance and the collective intelligence that builds organizational capacity. Consequently, school leaders are not being prepared with this end in mind.

I am interested how a school and all members of its community can make it the best learning environment possible. The need to enhance capacity at every level seems obvious; though setting a cultural transformation of a learning system in motion requires buy-in throughout the entire institution. My interests and beliefs parallel the subject and title of Klimek, Ritzenhein, and Sullivan's book (2008), *Generative Leadership: Shaping New Futures for Today's Schools*, wherein the authors promote an understanding of the dynamic organizations that schools may become during the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Based on my professional experiences in education, a social constructionist epistemology, and certain core assumptions about education as described above, I believe that a special kind of leadership is required to create a dynamic school organization that sustains vitality, creativity, and motivation in learning. That kind of leadership is participatory and collaborative, bringing together all voices of the community of stakeholders to create the dynamic school organization that breeds vitality, creativity, and motivation in learning. This belief is aligned with Appreciative Inquiry (AI)—a change strategy and a research methodology that is the basis for this study.

## APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva (1987) formulated Appreciative Inquiry (AI). From the very beginning, AI has been applied as an action research strategy and an organizational improvement practice which promotes change through the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations and the world around them (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Rather than centering on the remedy of deficits and problems, AI focuses on leading people and organizations in the direction of their strengths.

AI is a systematic discovery of the positive core which gives way to inquiry, imagination and innovation in change management for the future. The transformational potential of AI is grounded in dialogue and affirmation of the positive. The five principles that are central to Appreciative Inquiry are:

1. ***the constructionist principle*** – social interactions create the organizational world;

2. **the poetic principal** – one has the choice to study/inquire into anything and as such, with the choice begins to author a change;
3. **the principle of simultaneity** – inquiry is intervention and the moment inquiry begins, so does change;
4. **the anticipatory principle** – we move toward our collective images for the future; and
5. **the positivist principle** – positive affect and images foster positive results (Barrett & Fry, 2005; Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987; Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2005).

Appreciative Inquiry serves as my action research strategy and the theoretical perspective for this study. In particular, I gather data using the Four-D Model (Appendix 5) –originally developed by the GEM Initiative members in Harare, Zimbabwe (Watkins & Mohr, 2001). The “Four-D” consists of (a) *Discovery*: Appreciating that which gives life; (b) *Dream*: Envisioning impact; (c) *Design*: Co-constructing the future; and (d) *Destiny*: Sustaining the change. Adaptations to the design of this study were made in the way of adding an initial step (Watkins & Mohr, 2001) – Definition. It was added to aid the participants in their understanding of Appreciative Leadership, while concluding with the Design step as this was the goal for the AI exercise. An AI Learning Team (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr, & Griffin, 2003) gathered to conduct the modified Four-D AI process was comprised of the CM Core Administration Team. I chose Appreciative Inquiry due to its iterative nature and its congruence with the aims of my research and with the process for conducting it in context. The AI process allows for inquiry into a topic in a positive way that enables participants to create their own learning, individually and collectively, which in itself may be transformational for their future actions. AI is an experiential learning process that treats the participant’s experiences as important evidence as the participants advance through recursive steps that address the topic of the inquiry. Participants in this Appreciative Inquiry into Appreciative Leadership are able to “own” and explore the topic by identifying instances and components of it while seeking to understand the situation and environment (voices, roles, factors, etc.) in which it is used. Using AI as the action research strategy for this study permitted breaking away from the conventional problem solving and toward one that is strengths-based, positive, affirming and focused on generative school leadership.

Appreciative Leadership (AL) is a practical extension of the AI method. I use it in this study for examining leadership practices of the CM Core Administration Team. Appreciative Leadership cropped out of focused study of leadership styles that integrate appreciative practices. In their trailblazing work, Schiller, Holland, & Riley (2001) concluded that Appreciative Leaders (a) have an explicit spiritual orientation; (b) believe that leadership lives in the group; (c) believe that multiple truths exist; (d) demonstrate an unwavering commitment to bringing out the best in everyone; and (e) as leaders, find and employ generative forces for each situation (p. 162). Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader (2010) state that AL “is a philosophy, a way of being and a set of strategies” applied in a “relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power—to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance—to make a positive difference in the world” (p. 3).

Based on these accounts, I believe that what I witnessed at CM that was Appreciative Leadership in action. I selected Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership, its extension to investigate this further. In the next section, I present a competing perspective.

## A COMPETING (INDIVIDUALIST) PERSPECTIVE

Social life is commonly viewed from an individualist orientation in Western cultures. The historical development of this individualist orientation to social life has been examined (Gelpi, 1989; Heller, Sosner & Wellbery, 1986; Hewitt, 1989). Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton (1985) note the apparent ambiguities and paradoxes facing the radical individualism of modern life (p. 142). Given that “modern individualism has pursued individual rights and individual autonomy in ever new realms” (p. 143-44) and largely at the expense of communal and civic values, these authors question whether it is a socially viable way of life.

According to Kenneth and Mary Gergen (2004), one of the upsides of individualism is that people find life meaningful and important when “they feel loved, honored or valued for themselves.” The downside is the subjective reality of a fundamentally isolated being (p. 30). As an isolated being, the individual is primarily concerned about his/her own welfare and advancement, leaving little room for the true regard or concern for others (p. 30-31). Based on this, Gergen and Gergen make the case for constructionist notion that relationships, not individuals, offer the potential for promising forms of action.

### INDIVIDUALIST LEADERSHIP

Much of traditional study in organizational leadership has focused on the “*Great Man* vision of the leader”—individuals assumed to be “blessed with special skills, wisdom or powers of persuasion” (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 53). Our literature, theater and cinema celebrate the hero of mythic individualism, the anointed one who leaves society and embarks on a journey to find Truth and to “realize the moral good” (Bellah et al., 1985, p. 143). Once won, the hero saves those he left behind and rides off into the sunset to the accolades of a grateful horde that he is no longer able to stay among (p.143-146).

Social constructionists find “this view of leadership to be deeply flawed” (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 53) and one that leads to top down command and control structures that tend to become inflexible and salary structures where the top executive is given a salary 500 times that of the average worker (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 55). New visions of relational leadership are necessary that bring people together to make their own meaning and to lead for their own cause in a process that is innovative *in engagement and efficacy into the future* (Gergen, 2009b, p. 149). They support the idea that human beings in relationship, not individual psyches, are where the action is. The key to modern organizational efficacy is found in the dynamics of the social construction of teamwork and relational leadership.

### INDIVIDUALIST PEDAGOGY

Gergen & Gergen (2004) consider traditional education fundamentally individualist in orientation (p.62) as the teacher “transmits” knowledge and each individual student is expected to “receive” the packaged information. The individual is then judged on his/her own work, consisting largely of repeating the information given them by the teacher, and receives an individual performance rating in the form of grades.

In his *Socialist Critique of Individualism in Education*, Hargreaves (1980) noted that historically the educational system has been obsessed with the cult of individualism to the point of trivializing the social functions of education. The distinct tracks of teaching and learning are parallel and do not converge due to being focused on the bounded individual (Gergen, 2009b). At the administrative level for most schools, the hierarchical individualist approach to leadership is still firmly rooted in the *Great Man* model (Gergen & Gergen, 2004) with the weight falling upon the

shoulders of the superintendent, director and/or principal. Alone, supposedly at the top of the organizational hierarchy of educational leadership is in which one person is expected to be the inspiring visionary. Likewise, the blame or the credit for the achievements of those within the domain appertains to the leader alone.

I have chosen to opt for a perspective that is collaborative and which encourages dialogue in seeking to build individual and organizational capacity. This is in response to schools that are traditionally of an individualist orientation in their governing structures that will not be able to meet the expectations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. As school communities are subjected to ever-changing challenges and realities, they are in need for tools and processes that allow for continuous communal participation. I have chosen AI as the theoretical perspective for my study because it is an iterative, performative action research discovers and builds upon strengths of people and the organization in a positive fashion that is generative and recognizes and strives for optimal performance as a basis for future success (Cooperrider et al., 2003). Borrowing upon the subtitle “In the Eye of the Beholder” (Schiller et al) from their book *Appreciative Leaders* (2001), I believe in the promise and congruency of using an AI theoretical framework to examine Appreciative Leadership *through the Eyes of the Beholders!*

While conducting the search for this review of literature, I found three dissertations that used AI for studies in schools but had considered competing perspectives relevant to my study. Glasgow (2008) contemplated *school improvement theory* as a competing perspective but did not choose it because it focuses on change through a problem-solving research method. Hummel (2007) weighed *organizational culture theory* and decided against it believing that it limits the scope of examining people’s deep-felt perspectives of peak experiences. San Martin (2008) thought about *learning process theory* but elected not to use it because it lacks an appreciative, strengths-based inception. While I grant the pertinence of these alternative views, I am in accord with these three researchers on the greater benefits and possibilities inherent in the use of Appreciative Inquiry.

### SEARCH CRITERIA

The purpose of reviewing the literature was to identify and synthesize the published research relevant to my study. The following questions guided my search:

1. What empirical research has used an AI research process with school administrators that relates to highly effective leadership practices and Appreciative Leadership?
2. What empirical research exists relating to schools and Appreciative Leadership?
3. What empirical research uses an AI methodology in educational settings?

The empirical research that I aimed to capture met the following criteria: (a) contemporary empirical research with a well-defined qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodology, (b) empirical research published in peer-reviewed journals and (c) theoretical examination of Appreciative Inquiry since its inception as related to the focus of this study.

I was unable to find empirical research that used an AI theoretical research design to examine highly effective school Appreciative Leadership practices. My search found no empirical research concerning the use of Appreciative Leadership, whether in schools or in other organizations. In my search of *Appreciative Leadership*, predominantly theoretical contributions were the cited, including those by (1) Cooperrider and Srivastva; (2) Schiller et al.; and (3) Whitney,

Trosten-Bloom & Rader from their books and writings related to the same classic publications. In an interview, David Cooperrider remarked:

It could be argued that all leadership is Appreciative Leadership. It's the capacity to see the best in the world around us, in our colleagues, and in the groups we are trying to lead. It's the capacity to see the most creative and improbable opportunities in the marketplace. It's the capacity to see with an appreciative eye the true and the good, the better and the possible" (Creelman, 2001).

While all leadership may resemble Appreciative Leadership in certain ways, it seems a stretch to say they are the same. Key terms most frequently associated with Appreciative Leadership in schools in a Google Scholar search are presented in Table A. These terms may share some relationship to the qualities of Appreciative Leadership, but are not aligned 100% with the concept and practice.

**Table A**  
**Search Results for literature of terms related to Appreciative Leadership in Schools**

<b>Key Words + Schools</b>	<b>Google Scholar</b> (of all the databases used, Google Scholar provided the most number of citations)
Appreciative Leadership	58
Generative Leadership	66
Inclusive Leadership	516
Authentic Leadership	1420
Collective Leadership	1470
Distributive Leadership	3690
Shared Leadership	5080

A relevant example of Appreciative Inquiry as a theoretical research perspective was undertaken by professor Ray Calabrese, along with his colleagues and doctoral students in their investigation of various educational topics (Calabrese, Patterson, Liu, Goodvin, Hummel, & Nance, 2008; Calabrese, Roberts, McLeod, Niles, Christopherson, Singh, & Berry, 2008; Glasgow, 2008; Hummel, 2007; Niles, 2006; San Martin, 2008; Sheppard, 2007). The results of various patterns of search suggest that Appreciative Inquiry is more commonly used as an interview process or an intervention strategy within a research methodology that examines praxis (Boerema, 2011; Clarke, Egan, Fletcher, & Ryan, 2006; Luckcock, 2007). Bushe and Avital (2009) in their discussion of Appreciative Inquiry as a research method, highlight its use as an action research process that "studies something from the positive side" (p. 48). They also note that AI is a "proven successful form of action research when applied to changing organizational cultures" (p. 48). Recognizing that AI is highly generative, Bushe and Avital underscore the potential of AI in theory and model building, yet note that little has been done in using it as a research method.

## SYNTHESIS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

While my search failed to uncover empirical research specifically concerning Appreciative Leadership in schools, I did find topics germane to my research. Because Appreciative Inquiry is integral to the topic of my study as well as the theoretical research perspective and the methodology, I chose to focus the literature review on the following themes:

1. Appreciative Inquiry is a model of change management that may serve as a philosophy and methodology for change leadership in building capacity.
2. An “appreciative organization” is based on Appreciative Inquiry and constructionist epistemology. As such, it is optimally suited for the emerging conditions and challenges faced by organizations today.
3. Appreciative Leadership is a positive strengths-based collaborative style of leadership representing open-ended possibilities in creating a dynamic and successful organizational performance.

These themes are developed further in the following synthesis of the empirical and theoretical research.

### **BUILDING CAPACITY WITH APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY**

According to Barrett and Fry (2005), “Appreciative Inquiry is a strength-based, capacity building approach to transforming human systems toward a shared image of their most positive potential” (p. 25). At the core, AI is about making use of the generative capacity of dialogue in support of values and aspirations. In 1980, David Cooperrider, a young doctoral student performing an organizational analysis had an insight that focusing on the affirmative forces that contribute to a highly functioning organization at its best was a breakthrough beyond the deficit or typical problem focus of the field (Magruder & Mohr, 2001). In 1987, Cooperrider and Srivastva published their pioneering work, *Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life*, which makes the case that AI is not only a theory-building approach but also potentially a powerful intervention methodology. Their intention was to connect theory and practice within action research as they state “more than a method or technique, the appreciative mode of inquiry is a way of living with, being with, and directly participating in the varieties of social organization we are compelled to study” (p. 3). In his work *Positive Image, Positive Action: The Affirmative Basis of Organizing*, Cooperrider (1990), offered an exploratory set of propositions that focused on the power of positive imagery making up AI as an affirmative basis of organizing. Today, the commonly accepted five principles that have “inspired and moved the foundation of AI from theory to practice” are:

1. The Constructionist Principle
2. The Principle of Simultaneity
3. The Poetic Principle
4. The Anticipatory Principle
5. The Positive Principle. (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005).

Whitney, Trosten-Bloom & Cooperrider (2010) have built further upon these initial five principles, adding three more:

1. The Principal of Wholeness: Wholeness, the inclusion of all stakeholders in a group process, brings out the best in people and organizations as bringing people together in large forums stimulates creativity and builds collective capacity.

2. The Enactment Principle: Positive change occurs when the process used to create the change is a living model of the ideal future; and
3. The Free-choice Principle: People perform better and are more committed when they have freedom to choose how and when to contribute. Free choice stimulates organizational excellence and positive change. (p. 52)

An AI approach to organizational analysis is (1) “a search for knowledge, and (2) a theory of collective action designed to evolve the vision and will of a group, an organization, or a society as a whole” (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005, p. 3). The initial goal in conducting an Appreciative Inquiry is to identify and highlight the *positive core* or the life-giving forces for the focus of the inquiry. The goal of follow-up is to explore the possibilities for further development and growth.

The AI orientation—“*the art of the possible*”—promotes cooperative capacity through appreciation of *what is* as well as provocative inquiry into *what might be* through *collaborative effort*. Watkins & Mohr (2001) identify five common processes for applying AI to organizational change:

1. Choose the positive topic as the focus of the inquiry;
2. Inquire into the stories of the life-giving forces;
3. Locate themes that appear in the stories and select topics for further inquiry;
4. Create shared images for a preferred future; and
5. Find innovative ways to create that future (p. 39).

Flexibility is exercised to fit the needs of the inquiry so backtracking and overlap of these processes is common.

Since the inception of AI work by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) with their *Dimensions of AI Model* (Appendix 6), the Mohr/Jacobsgaard *Four-I Model* (Appendix 7) and the GEM Initiative's *Four-D Model* (Appendix 5) have followed, with the latter being used more widely. In the world of AI practice, adaptations of the model to better fit the local needs have innovated change (Carbonell, 2009; Odell, 2002; Saha, 2012). Interestingly, all of the models represent the dichotomy put forth by Cooperrider and Srivastva (Appendix 8) which highlights the difference in action research assumptions: Paradigm 1 states that *Organizing is a Problem to be Solved*, while Paradigm 2 posits that *Organizing is a Mystery to be Embraced*. This dichotomy presents organizations with a ‘fork in the road’ and a paradigmatic choice to be made in their own development.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, the use of AI was still in its formative stages as pioneers in the field began to use it in different situations and organizations. Carter and Cooperrider worked successfully with a Canadian accounting firm in the first large-scale AI intervention. Thatchenkery worked with the Institute for Cultural Affairs in an AI-based three-year data gathering project for developing future plans. Barrett and Cooperrider used an AI-influenced intervention with a prominent hotel team employing generative metaphor, development of figurative descriptions of social situations to resolve an internal conflict. As the SIGMA Program for Global Change supported innovative organizations in the private, public, non-profit, and cross sector partnerships that were interested in advancing positive global change, Appreciative Inquiry was used in theory building (Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

*Imagine Chicago* was designed as a partnership between community builders, educators, and the city's youth to cultivate hope and civic commitment to make a difference. Appreciative Inquiry was used city-wide to gather stories and commitments as well as to empower community-based led initiatives. To Bliss Browne, the leader, it was important to establish an inter-generational dialogue about the city's future and to create a vision (Browne, 1998). *Imagine Chicago* gave rise to use of AI in *Imagine* endeavors in other communities (Foster, 1998; Hall, 1998; Stewart & Royal, 1998), schools (Willoughby & Tosey, 2007), hospitals (Holman, Paulson, & Nichols; 1998), and even to a nation-wide undertaking by the country of Nepal (Odell, 1998).



Since its beginnings, the development of AI practices has served to build capacity in people and subsequently in their organizations. The use of the underlining AI principles and processes allow for a generative spirit to be unleashed in giving vitality to the effort of addressing the topic at hand. At its core, AI is about inquiring with an appreciative positive mind in working toward a shared and desired future.

### APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AND ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

David Cooperrider, in his early landmark essay, *Some Implications for Management: Toward a Theory of the Affirmative Organization* (1990) noted that by focusing upon a positive image and following up with positive action, members of an organization learn to value the life-enhancing properties of the organization. In addition, members learn to value and affirm themselves and their work. Cooperrider (1990), put forth the following as an emerging theory of affirmation:

1. Organizations as made and imagined are artifacts of the affirmative mind. An understanding of organizational life requires an understanding of the dynamics of the positive image as well as of the processes through which isolated images become interlocked images and how nascent affirmations become guiding affirmations.
2. No matter what its previous history is, virtually any pattern of organizational action is open to alteration and reconfiguration. Patterns of organizational action are not fixed by nature in any blind micro-determinist way—whether biological, technological, or environmental.
3. To the extent that organizations' imagination projections are the key to their current conduct, organizations are free to seek transformations in conventional practice by replacing conventional images with images of a new and better future.
4. Organizations are *heliotropic* in character in the sense that organizational actions have an observable and largely automatic tendency to evolve in the direction of positive imagery. Positive imagery and hence heliotropic movement is endemic (prevalent) to organizational life, which means that organizations create their own realities to greater extent than normally assumed.
5. Conscious evolution of positive imagery is a viable option for organized systems as large as global society or as small as the dyad or group. Also, the more an organization experiments with the conscious evolution of positive imagery the better it will become; there is an observable self-reinforcing, educative effect of affirmation. Affirmative competence is the key to the self-organizing system.
6. To understand organizations in affirmative terms is to understand that the greatest obstacle to group and organizational well-being is the positive image, the affirmative projection that guides the group or the organization.
7. Organizations do not need to be fixed. They need constant reaffirmation. More precisely, organizations as heliotropic systems need to be appreciated. Every new affirmative projection of the future is a consequence of an appreciative understanding of the past or the present.
8. The executive vocation in a post-bureaucratic society is to nourish the appreciative soil, from which affirmative projections grow, branch off, evolve, and become collective projections. Creating the conditions for organization-wide appreciation is the single most important measure that can be taken to ensure the conscious evolution of a valued and positive future. (pp. 115-124)

This essay by Cooperrider appears in *Appreciative Management and Leadership*, the classic book by Srivastva and Cooperrider (1990) in which they attempt to bring Appreciative Inquiry into the mainstream of organization development practice. This book, collaboration with several associates, promotes an appreciative approach in organization development as a force for creativity and affirmation. In *Appreciative Inquiry as an Organizational Development Tool*, Martinetz (2002) also notes Cooperrider's attempt to establish a theory of affirmative organization and recognizes that, while AI emphasizes the collaboration and participation of all voices in an organization, it is "a systems orientation that focuses on changing the organization rather than the people" (p. 34). Martinetz concludes, "The system starts in individuals. Change begins at any level, which in turn will affect the organization in some way. We cannot wait to start at the top; we can change small pieces that then affect the whole system" (p. 38).

The field Organization Development (OD) has grown steadily during its brief sixty year history. French & Bell (1999) has defined as a systematic process for applying behavioral science principles and practices in organizations to increase individual and organizational effectiveness. It is an organizational improvement strategy, and it is about how people and organizations function and how to get them to function better (p. 1).

Closely related to the field of Organizational Behavior, OD includes attention to topics such as motivation, groups and teams, leadership, power and political behaviors, conflict management, job re-design and culture changes (Yaeger & Bengtsson, 2005). The study and application of OD has brought the topic of organizational culture to the fore. In recent times,

many organizations are embracing new methods and tools that bring all voices to the table. Participatory, inclusive decision-making and increased global collaboration with the help of social media platforms to level the playing field are becoming more common, facilitating our capacity to be more experimental, playful, and engaged. (Stratton-Berkessel, 2010, p. 18).

The authoritarian organizational structures that used top-down problem-solving paradigm are increasingly recognized as detrimental to organizational cohesiveness and creativity.

In his classic article supporting AI, *Creating Appreciative Learning Cultures* (1995), Frank Barrett recognized several limitations of a problem-solving mindset:

1. Dwelling on problems is inherently a conservative, limiting approach to inquiry;
2. A problem focus furthers a deficiency orientation;
3. Analytic problem solving furthers a fragmented view of the world; and
4. Problem solving results in further separation between stakeholders. (pp. 2-3).

Following up on Senge's notion of the learning organization that seeks to be creative (Senge, 2000), Barrett asked "what kind of thinking leads to generative learning and innovation?" The answer, according to Barrett, is an appreciative learning culture which "accentuates the past, evokes images of the possible futures, and creates a spirit of restless, ongoing inquiry that empowers members to new levels of activity" (pp. 4-5). Barrett (1995) posits specific competencies necessary to support the appreciative learning system. These are:

1. **Affirmative Competence:** The organization draws upon current and past successes, strengths and potentials.
2. **Expansive Competence:** The organization challenges habits and conventional practices, seeking to grow through demonstrating a willingness expand towards new horizons which inspires passionate engagement.

3. **Generative Competence:** The organization constructs integrative systems that include meaning making and sense-making so that members may recognize their contribution in making progress.
4. **Collaborative Competence:** The organization allows for dialogue, while encouraging diversity and multiple perspectives by all members in the service of the established goals. (Barrett, 1995; Stratton-Berkessel, 2010)

In light of current trends in the global economy, increased competition would appear to favor organizations innovative in meeting the challenges of the post-industrial age. Organizations need to develop cultures that encourage strengths-based learning that multiplies possibilities rather than ones hemmed in by deficit-focused problem solving. The blending of AI with a learning culture that also is appreciative, in the words of Barrett (1995), will “nurture innovative thinking by fostering an affirmative focus, expansive thinking, a generative sense of meaning, and create collaborative systems” (p. 13).

Gervase Bushe, prominent in the field of OD, has devoted thought to the different ways Appreciative Inquiry can create a change in social systems, especially organizations. Wary of the misapplication of AI, Bushe, in 1998, presented a paper entitled *Five Theories of Change Embedded in Appreciative Inquiry* at the 18<sup>th</sup> World Organization Development Congress. Later published as a chapter in Cooperrider & Whitney (2005), *Appreciative Inquiry: Foundations in Positive Organization Development*, Bushe identified the five theories of change:

1. **Socially Constructing Reality**, where language is an active agent in the creation of meaning and when a theory of such is coded in words and images, then a powerful force may shape an organization;
2. **Heliotropic Hypothesis** is that an organization evolves toward the most positive images that they hold of themselves;
3. **Organization’s Inner Dialogue** focuses upon the stories that the people of the organization tell themselves and each other when interpreting events and decisions; as positive stories influence inner dialogue, so dialogue influences the ability to effect positive change;
4. **Resolving Paradoxical Dilemmas** is about a team evoking positive stories and images to move through a paradox it is stuck in; new images create opportunities for new ways of acting; and
5. **Appreciative Process** is a change agent technique that involves tracking – a state of vigilance where one is constantly on the lookout for more of what one wants; and *fanning* – an action that amplifies, encourages, and helps you to get more of whatever you are looking for. (Bushe in Cooperrider, et al, 2005, p.121-132)

Using AI as an organization development intervention, according to Bushe, allows for the use of these five theories that are embedded in AI.

In their article, *Assessment of the State of Appreciative Inquiry: Past, Present, and Future*, Yaeger, Sorensen, and Bengtsson (2005) present an assessment of fifty studies based on a review of over four-hundred publications and papers during the period of 1986 to 2003 and find that AI has made significant impact on the field of organizational development and change. They note that the AI approach has grown from the fledgling work in organization development initiated by Cooperrider and Srivastva through a period of growth highlighted by the 1996 Avon-Mexico Project, 1996 United Religions Initiative, and 1998 GTE project, to become an established worldwide practice.

Roughly two-thirds of the studies reviewed were identified as having a purpose of strategic change, the other third the goal(s) of “evaluation, succession planning, relational capital, decreased turnover, exit interviews, revitalizing the core, creating dialogue, team building, leadership development and diversity initiatives” (p. 564). Sixty-two percent of the studies reported that the level of intercession involved the whole company, with the remaining studies focused upon smaller organizational units.

The authors note that during this same seven years the use of Appreciative Inquiry spread across all continents. There was, as well, a marked increase in number of publications related to AI. Recognizing that AI has become a major force in the practice of organizational change, Yaeger Sorensen & Bengtsson (2005) re-affirm that AI “reinforces, expands and continues the action research tradition of the field” (p. 567) that was begun by Kurt Lewin, and contributes to the promise of more effective teams and organizations.

During the last fifteen years, AI has been employed widely in organization development work in the corporate, nonprofit, government, and community sectors using the AI Summit large group methodology (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr, & Griffin; 2003) as well as focused OD work with articulated teams. High profile worldwide organizations include McDonald’s, John Deere, British Airways, U.S. Navy, World Vision, American Red Cross, Canadian Department of National Defense and the United Way have used the AI Summit methodology. The agendas have varied, though typically have centered on strategic planning, organization design and leadership development. Some organizations such as Hunter-Douglas, Nutritional and Syntegra, however, have used the AI summit as an ongoing way of managing.

The AI Summit, in using the 4-D cycle, has become identified as a large-group process that stresses the relational nature of innovation and the power of the positive in increasing organizational performance. Authors Ludema, Whitney, Mohr and Griffin (2003) recognize that the AI Summit shares the following key features with other large group processes: (a) the importance of getting the whole system in the room; (b) focusing on the future; (c) promoting dialogue, voice, and search for the common good; and (d) upholding a commitment to self-management (p. 22). Ludema et al. (2003) state that the AI Summit methodology is distinctive in the following five ways:

1. **Social Constructionist Assumptions:** The basic premise is that together we invent our future by engaging in meaningful dialogue in the direction of our ideals.
2. **Appreciative Approach:** The most efficient route towards positive change is to learn, appreciate and value the examples of the best performances already within the organization.
3. **Commitment to Continuous Inquiry:** From the very first question asked during the AI Summit, human systems grow consistently in the direction of the subsequent questions in the inquiry.
4. **Search for Higher Ground:** The AI Summit is about action inspired by hope and aspiration, which breeds a sense of an elevated purpose and a confidence in moving forward.
5. **Attention to Values-Based Organization Design:** The AI Summit allows for time and attention to be paid to the values that are embodied within the organization and to liberate their use and support within the whole system. (pp. 22-26)

The AI Summit taps upon the energy and potential of the participants and provides a forum for the co-construction of their own transformation and that of their organization.

Following the interest and success in using the AI Summit methodology, experts in OD were attentive to the possibilities of further extending the appreciative influence into organizations. In 2001, a first edition of *The Appreciative Organization* (Anderson, Cooperrider, Gergen, Gergen,

McNamee, & Whitney) was published to provide “the inspiration and resources for developing an Appreciative Organization” or for the *process of Appreciative Organizing*, a form and process that the authors believe are “maximally suitable for the emerging conditions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Anderson et al., 2008, p. 9). In support of building the appreciative organization, the authors invite organizations to foster relational interdependencies, encourage multiple realities, act within the moment, and always keep the conversations going within their organizations. The idea of Appreciative Organizing is that it be a collaborative process of constructing meaning based on appreciation (p. 24).

Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2004) highlighted how Appreciative Inquiry contributes to the creation of an appreciative organization. They wrote that the appreciative organization is a liberating space consisting of an appreciative stance that makes possible the *six freedoms of appreciative living*:

1. freedom to be known in relationship;
2. freedom to be heard;
3. freedom to dream in community;
4. freedom to choose to contribute;
5. freedom to act with support; and
6. freedom to be positive (p. 8).

Whitney & Trosten-Bloom deemed these freedoms essential to the process of co-constructing and nurturing the positive culture of an appreciative organization.

In *Designing Organizations as if Life Matters: Principles of Appreciative Organizing* Diana Whitney (2008) noted that “new forms of organizing are responding to the need for a redirection in the purpose and strategy of business as well as leadership styles, decision making practices, employee processes and organization structures” (p. 1). Organizations are feeling the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and more and more are becoming more attentive to aligning their organization in the life affirming interests of people, planet and profit (Whitney, 2008). David Cooperrider (2003) spoke to this point in his presentation of *Business as an Agent of World Benefit*. Subsequently, the likes of Pricewaterhouse Coopers and Monsanto India have made real-world innovations in answer to real world problems (World Inquiry, 2011).

Whitney (2008) contends that a new genre of life affirming organizations is made possible by answering the invitation to participate in Appreciative Organizing – *as if life matters* (p. 2). Such an organization focuses on what gives life to people, communities and the environment. In describing what makes one organization more life affirming than another, Whitney postulates nine principles of Appreciative Organizing:

1. **Evolutionary Purpose:** A clear and compelling purpose for the organization is set that resonates with the hearts and minds of the people and which serves as a collaborative call to socially uplifting action.
2. **Harmonious Wholeness:** Embracing globalism, an organization must consider and account for its place in the whole, no matter how small or local. Appreciative organization practices and structures bring people together with dialogue seeking harmony. Harmony in turn allows for valuing diversity, which supports a sense of belonging to the whole.
3. **Appreciative Leadership:** Relationally grounded, Appreciative Leadership focuses on bringing out the best in people, organizations and communities through conscious acts of discovery, dream and design. Appreciative Leaders foster conversations at all levels that matter in forging partnerships.
4. **Positive Emotional Climate:** The causal benefits and value of a positive emotional climate have been well documented. A climate of safety is primordial. Development

of appreciation is key to valuing of ideas, skills and aspirations that spreads throughout the organization.

5. **Strong Centers of Meaning:** Vitality in organizations increases with meaningfulness. As collaboration increases, a dramatic shift occurs in the meaning in authority from “power over” to a shared responsibility that allows for the relatedness, participation in ownership and co-creation towards producing results.
6. **Just-in-Time Structures:** Appreciative Organizing invites a shift from assigned job roles to the continuous alignment of strengths, from role-based work to strengths-based work. The process is dynamic and offers no guarantee that a procedure, once established, will enjoy longevity. All are fully engaged.
7. **Liberation Economics:** Appreciative Organizing is a shift from using currencies to accumulate monetary wealth to economic policies and practices that give life to multiple kinds of wealth aimed directly at human well-being (i.e., education, healthcare).
8. **Engaged Participation:** Based on the principle that all whose future is at stake ought to have a voice, authority for decision-making migrates in that direction and top-down structures become flatter and more participative.
9. **Caring Culture:** As people are cared for, they too learn to care for others. Leadership in appreciative organizations creates the culture of caring in three dimensions: caring for our customers; being mindful of the impact upon the environment; and caring about integrity. (pp. 5-21)

Recognizing that these principles represent only the scaffolding for Appreciative Organizing, Whitney recommends further development by practitioners and scholars, including Appreciative Inquiry into life-giving practices within specific organizations. This in turn “would elevate practice and theory building about appreciative organization” (p. 21).

Appreciative Organizing has continued to grow in the private and public sectors around the world with novel applications. Highlighted as a shining example in the early years, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters (2004) has used Appreciative Inquiry in their organizing to align their organizational practices with their proactive world-benefit business focus with many other companies following suit (Case Western Reserve University, 2012; Cooperrider, 2012). Radford (2009) highlighted the need to work boldly as times of crisis can be times of transformation, especially when the traditional business models focused solely on profits is no longer viable. Donnan and Shaked, guest editors for the August, 2010 issue of *AI Practitioner* included glimpses into companies in Denmark, Belgium, India, The Netherlands, USA, and Canada that have used Appreciative Organizing to improve specific organizational functions. The use of AI in OD is similarly highlighted in Denmark (Hornstrup & Johansen, 2009) and the United Kingdom (Barnes & Radford, 2009) in other issues of *AI Practitioner*.

During the 2009 World Appreciative Inquiry Conference held in Nepal, the focus was on creating a positive revolution for sustainable change that crosses the domains of business, health, education, human development, community development and environmental renewal. Clearly, the spirit and intention of organizing appreciatively has spread from its initial work in organization development and across many boundaries – geographic and disciplinary. Appreciative Inquiry with its conversation-based approach to organizational change is based upon understanding organizations as living human systems (Lewis, Passmore, & Cantore, 2011) – something needed and asked for the entire world over.

Appreciative Organizing requires a new paradigm of leadership within the organization that allows for collaboration and expanded participation in all aspects of the organization. As Anderson et al. (2008) propose, leadership of an appreciative organization is conceived and birthed through

relationships. Almost by definition, an appreciative organization needs to lead through collaborative participation, seek out stakeholders, value diversity and difference, align strengths, value commonalities within the community and seek to value and celebrate the participation within the organization. “Leadership is born in patterns of relationship; successful leadership thus requires inclusion, coordination, and positive co-construction” (Anderson et al., 2008, p. 43).

### APPRECIATIVE LEADERSHIP

As the application and uses of Appreciative Inquiry started to bloom, Srivastva and Cooperrider (1990) wrote in *Appreciative Management and Leadership* that “organizations in the twenty-first century will look very different” as they adjust to “an environment of unpredictable demands and a workforce of great cultural and ethnic diversity.”

In order to survive under these conditions, executives must become *realistic visionaries* who can recognize the talent, intelligence and creativity that diverse organization members bring to their work and who can build on this diversity to inspire greater commitment and achievement. (inside jacket cover).

This book was written for executives of organizations, advising them to heed the call for a new style of management and leadership. In the chapter titled *The Call for Executive Appreciation*, Srivastva, Fry and Cooperrider (1990) set precedent by identifying the underlying concepts of Appreciative Leadership and detailing the appreciative stance as: (a) the foundations of appreciative knowing; (b) the processes of appreciative interchange; and (c) the processes of appreciative action. According to the authors, “the good executive is appreciative and can create an appreciative organization” especially as “the role of appreciative cognition, interchange, and affect is far more important to the life of socio-organizational systems than is ordinarily assumed” (p. 32). The authors set a high bar of expectations: the Appreciative Leader is generative in ways of knowing, relating with others and being oneself—while also using leadership language carefully crafted to be invitational, inclusive, cooperative, courageous and even spiritual. The appreciative executive of organizational life is a blend of the scholar, colleague, and *sculptor of conversations* (p. 33).

In 2001, Schiller et al. compiled stories of positive revolutionaries in their publication of *Appreciative Leaders: In the Eye of the Beholder*. Their intent was to bring to attention a more articulate and transparent model of appreciative leading. In delving into the stories of the Appreciative Leaders, the authors garnered the insight that Appreciative Leadership is more than just an individual style; it is also a method and practice. From their analysis of data gathered from interviews, Schiller et al. shaped their *Model of Appreciative Leadership* (Appendix 4). Leadership characteristics were categorized into three major clusters:

1. **World View** – the conceptual frame and operating philosophy of leaders;
2. **Practices** – which described behaviors of the leaders; and
3. **Values** – these attributes were representative of the leaders’ values and beliefs.

Equally important, the authors identified attributes of the Appreciative Leader as being a catalyst that bridges personal philosophy and day-to-day behaviors through the use of relational practices. The authors summarize the relationship of the components within the model this way:

In the Model of Appreciative Leadership, Appreciative Leaders translate their World View, their basic views and intentions, into effective Practices. These behaviors show how Appreciative Leaders connect with others. Values are lens we use to see and evaluate those day-to-day behaviors or Practices. These are the checks and balances that show leaders act on what they value, the hallmark of Appreciative Leaders (p. 160).

In addition to their established model, Schiller et al. (2001) posited five themes that they believe characterize Appreciative Leaders:

1. Leaders are belief-based with explicit spiritual orientation and practices.
2. Leadership lives in the group, not in any one person.
3. Multiple truths exist in ways of thinking, doing, and being.
4. Appreciative Leaders have an unwavering commitment to bringing out the best in themselves and others.
5. Appreciative Leaders find generative forces in their many circumstances and multiple systems. (pp. 162-168)

The *Model of Appreciative Leadership* and these Appreciative Leadership themes link theory and practice congruently and provide guidelines for future organizing and Appreciative Leadership development.

Gervase Bushe, author of *Clear Leadership* (2009, 2001) and several articles pertaining to advantages and potential drawbacks to the use of Appreciative Inquiry (Bushe 2011, 2007, 2005), also has written about the Appreciative Leader (2006). He asks what those managers who bring out the best in others do that makes them so successful at managing people. Rather than focusing on problems, Bushe notes, they focus on solutions and what is working well. They go a step further by looking to amplify it by building upon strengths rather than weaknesses. This appreciative process, according to Bushe, results in a greater positive impact on people's motivation and organizational performance (2006).

An Appreciative Leader looks to increase desired values, relationships, and performance by engaging people's imagination, aspirations and spirit (Bushe, 2006, p. 2). In the process, an Appreciative Leader encourages "the parts in others that want to succeed, to make a contribution, to achieve, to be a part of a dynamic team" (p. 3) and to take pride in making a difference. Bushe reminds us that moving the leadership culture of an organization toward a more appreciative stance requires a collective effort.

Jack Ricchiuto opens his book *Appreciative Leadership: Building Sustainable Organizations* (2005) with remarks titled *The Appreciative Challenge*. Here, Ricchiuto highlights the practices and performance of appreciative organizations and the need for Appreciative Leadership "to focus people's attention in ways that inspires passion, discover opportunities, and engage strengths" (p. 11). In light of the challenges posed by the predominant problem-solving paradigm, he frankly states that the question of this century is "how [do] we develop a culture of Appreciative Leadership?" Ricchiuto responds with *The Appreciative Leadership Manifesto* (Appendix 9), which specifies the principles and objectives that support the development of Appreciative Leadership in organizations as we presently find them. In studying sustainable positive change, Mantel and Ludema (2004) examined a corporate conversational map comprised of nine years of change data from an organization that had launched a successful positive change program using an Appreciative Inquiry process and hoped to make it sustainable. They poignantly noted that, paradoxically, "sustaining change is intentionally moving towards a defined future while remaining poised and responsive to the surprise of the future" (p. 3).

Their case study found: (1) that appreciative change is sustained by shaping the corporate conversational streams and (2) sustained by extending Appreciative Inquiry into a continuous philosophical approach facilitated by Appreciative Leadership and Appreciative Organizational Design. Mantel and Ludema (2004, pp. 4-5) prescribe six practices for shaping conversations at the individual and organizational levels:

1. Listen to the Conversational Streams
2. Join Conversations of Possibility & Opportunity
3. Attend to Conversational Cross-influence & Balance
4. Enfold Voices of the Whole System



5. Pursue Continual Meaning-Making
6. Expand Conversations with Written Documents

Mantel and Ludema (2004, p. 5) also talk about four principles for sustainability that develop Appreciative Leadership:

1. Belief in the Possible;
2. Approach Others with Unconditional Positive Regard;
3. Radically Include Others; and
4. Continuously Move Toward Others.

Appreciative Organizational Design principles for sustainability include:

1. Use Processes to Develop Shared Vision & Goals;
2. Design for Structural Inclusion;
3. Use Processes for Continual Appreciative Inquiry; and
4. Develop Appreciative Leadership (pp. 5-6).

The authors believe that these general principles may be applied in other organizations interested in meeting the challenge of sustaining positive change environments.

In the foreword to the book *Appreciative Leadership: Focus on What Works to Drive Winning Performance and Build a Thriving Organization* by Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader (2010), Kenneth Gergen remarks that there has been phenomenal growth and application of Appreciative Inquiry over the last twenty years and that “it is arguably the most powerful process of positive organizational change ever devised” (p. x). Given the dearth of resources relating AI and leadership, Gergen recognizes this book as being a landmark in the theory and practice of organizational development.

Based on their earlier work with AI, Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader asked the following questions as focal points to their writing of their book:

- What role does *leadership* play in liberating power, fostering positive change, and promoting ongoing organizational vitality and success?
- What is unique, special, and even exciting about this kind of leadership, at its best?
- What is *unique, special* and even *exciting* about this kind of leadership, at its best? (p. xvi).

The authors address these questions with personal observations, appreciative interviews and appreciative focus groups. The result was a framework of Appreciative Leadership. Whitney et al. define Appreciative Leadership as:

... the relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power – to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance – to make a positive difference in the world. (p. 3)

Four ideas embedded in the definition about Appreciative Leadership are: (1) it is about relational capacity; (2) it is a positive worldview; (3) it is about turning potential into positive power; and (4) it has rippling effects (2010, p. 3).

Based on their research, the authors derived *Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership* (Appendix 10). They are:

1. **Inquiry:** *Asking positively powerful questions*  
The practice of this lets people know that they and their contributions are valued.
2. **Illumination:** *Bringing out the best in people*

People are supported to learn about and use their strengths and understand how to best contribute.

3. **Inclusion:** *Engaging with people to author the future*  
This gives people a sense of belonging resulting in a sense of ownership.
4. **Inspiration:** *Awakening the creative spirit*  
With a vision comes a sense of hope and direction. Creativity and energy are unleashed.
5. **Integrity:** *Making choices for the good of the whole*  
The example of giving our best sets the example for all. (pp. 23-24)

A leader practicing the five core strategies of Appreciative Leadership is the change s/he wants for others and models the cultivation of character, liberation of others' potential, fostering collaborations, designing innovative structures, and facilitating positive change (Whitney et al, p. 25).

Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader (2010) note that Appreciative Leaders have *Appreciative Intelligence*. Appreciative Intelligence is a metaphor that Thatchenkery and Metzker (2006) describe in their book, *Seeing the Mighty Oak in the Acorn*, as "the ability to perceive the positive inherent generative potential in the present" (p. xi). They state that Appreciative Intelligence is an individual ability, yet significantly affects group and organizations. They find three components of Appreciative Intelligence:

1. **Reframing**, the ability to perceive, to see, to interpret, to frame or re-contextualize;
2. **Appreciating the Positive**, the process of selectivity and judgment of something's positive value or worth; and
3. **Seeing How the Future Unfolds from the Present**, connecting the generative aspects of the present with a desirable end goal (pp. 6-7).

Each of these components of Appreciative Intelligence is necessary and compliments the other. The qualities exhibited by people with Appreciative Intelligence include persistence, conviction that one's actions matter, tolerance for uncertainty, and irrepressible resilience. Leaders, who demonstrate a high level of Appreciative Intelligence, are able according to Thatchenkery and Metzker, "to generate the future they see in the present" (p. 33). The authors believe that by applying Appreciative Intelligence through the individuals of an organization, the organization is more likely to thrive and become more effective by building better leaders, healthier relationships with connections between groups, and a better future.

It is interesting to note that the *AI Practitioner: The International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry*, a nexus for articles by leading thinkers, professionals and active practitioners in the field, has dedicated two recent publications to the topic of Appreciative Leadership. This reflects world-wide interest in the subject and its application within various disciplines. The November 2009 issue focused on the efforts in Sweden where Appreciative Leadership courses were taught with an interest in following their impact as applied to both personal and business development. The impetus for offering the Appreciative Leadership course at Chalmers School of Entrepreneurship at the Chalmers University of Technology was to promote entrepreneurship, defined as "creating and introducing the new as well as being able to make things grow" (Saiduddin, Larsson, & Lundqvist, 2009, p. 4). The course was later expanded to the master's level with a focus on building capacity related to "leadership over oneself." The contributions to the journal by practitioners from variety of fields illustrated the many ways that Appreciative Leadership was applied. The editors, Saiduddin, Larsson, and Lundqvist summarized these accounts by noting that "the heart of Appreciative Leadership is Appreciative Inquiry. *Appreciation* is about valuing rather than judging, about building on strengths rather than solving or eliminating problems. *Inquiry* is about initiating

a process—within individuals and groups—of asking questions as well as communicating and using the stories revealed” (pp. 5-6).

In the February 2011 of *AI Practitioner*, guest editors Sarah Lewis and Lesley Moore extracted the principles of positive and Appreciative Leadership extracted from accounts of Appreciative Leadership practices submitted by several authors for their consideration. The common principals of positive and Appreciative Leadership are:

- Leadership as relational
- Leadership as balance between control and direction
- Leadership as belief in the value of everyone’s voice and experience
- Leadership as recognizing the importance of shared importance
- Leadership as integrity
- Leadership as inclusion
- Leadership as searching for what works
- Leadership as celebrating everyday issues
- Leadership as getting out of the way
- Leadership as being bold and taking risks
- Leadership as creating connections and synchronism
- Leadership as an emergent, iterative, learning process

In addition to the Lewis and Moore referenced earlier foundational works of *Positive Leadership* by Cameron (2008), Whitney et al. (2010), and Schiller et al. (2001), as well as their own professional experiences as change facilitators (Appendix 11). It is interesting to note the convergence of work in Appreciative Organization and Appreciative Leadership as evident in the works of Whitney (2009, 2008, 2007, and 2010 with Trosten-Bloom and Rader) and Lewis, who have written *Positive Psychology at Work: How Positive Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry Create Inspiring Organizations* (2011) and *Appreciative Inquiry for Change Management: Using AI to Facilitate Organizational Development* (2008).

### THE APPLICATION OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY IN EDUCATION

Educational organizations ranging from kindergartens to universities have made successful use of Appreciative Inquiry and the *appreciative stance* to build capacity within school communities. As Stetson and Miller (2003) noted:

Educational organizations can use the process for strategic planning, shifting from a teaching to a learning orientation, team building, leadership development, visioning, assessment and evaluation, formation—virtually any agenda for human systems change. The approach focuses an educational organization on continuously inquiring into what's already working very well within the system under study and deliberately and systematically creating more of it. The human or social system under study can be the organization as a whole, the leadership or management team, a particular department, or even a classroom. (p. 1).

The primary focus of Appreciative Inquiry in education has been school improvement—strategic planning—school revitalization work (Adamson, Samuelson, Willoughby, 2002; Aronson, Arsht, & Griffin, 2003; Arcoleo, 2003; Bergevin & Peletier, 2003; Cooperrider & Pratt, 2001; Davis, 2006; Dinga, 2007; Evans, 2003; Fifield, 2009, Fry, 2010; Hauger & Halvorsen, 2007; Henry, 2005; Hinrichs, 2002a; Hinrichs & Rhodes-Yenowine, 2003; Luth-Hanssen & Haavimb, 2007; Morris, Schiller, Stavros, & Morotta, 2002; Mohr, 2003; Nesje & Nesje, 2007; Pratt, 2003; Stetson & Miller, 2006; Szecey, 2003; Torres & Weisenberger, 2001; Willoughby & Tosey, 2007; Wishnick, 2007).

Typically, the preferred format for engagement has been an AI Summit. The results at Heathside School in Weybridge, Surrey, UK (Adamson, Samuels, & Willoughby, 2002; Willoughby & Samuels, 2009) and the West Springfield Public Schools District in West Springfield, Massachusetts, USA by Debbie Morris, Marge Schiller, Jackie Stavros, and Suzanne Marotta (2002) are exemplary of the effective use of AI in school improvement and strategic planning work are projects. Each school was able to draw together members of the educational community to engage in dialogue that served to shape the future direction of the respective schools. The effect on the learning environment was immensely positive, sometimes inspirationally so. At Heathside, for example, the positive affect from the AI process supported the community in dealing with a local emergency. A follow-up article to Heathside School achieving Healthy School Status, noted the significant impact of the AI process in facilitating the review and improvement process by enabling a spirit of inquiry and positive change that was embraced by the community (Nesje, 2007). Another classic example was the case study *Imagine Meadfield* which utilized the AI 4D Cycle in the school improvement process. The three main themes that emerged were (a) participants in the summits provided inspired responses; (b) stories from the AI process unlocked the door to the local culture and learning environment; and (c) the AI process allowed for the development of a collaborative change strategy (Willoughby & Tosey, 2007).

In addition to looking at the performance of the whole school, AI has been employed in examining classroom practices. Ricketts & Willis (2001) have connected AI with experiential education, while Torres (2001) has specifically used AI concepts in facilitation of experiential learning. Yballe and O'Connor (O'Connor & Yballe, 2007; Yballe & O'Connor, 2004; Yballe & O'Connor, 2000) have described *Appreciative Pedagogy (AP)* as practices stemming from an appreciative stance in experiential education. According to Yballe and O'Connor (2004), AP shows up in the learning environment as AI's basic beliefs, values, and social inquiry process. The core values of AP on "a positive change in education" include the following:

**Value 1:** Appreciative Pedagogy is experience centered.

**Value 2:** Appreciative Pedagogy proposes a bias towards success.

**Value 3:** Appreciative Pedagogy has a Transformative Bias, as opposed to description and knowledge banking

**Value 4:** Appreciative Pedagogy is strongly oriented toward the challenging vision of a life worth living

**Value 5:** Appreciative Pedagogy is biased in favor of supportive partnerships rather than hierarchic relationships in the learning experience

**Value 6:** Appreciative Pedagogy favors dialogic processes, where students and teachers are constantly engaged in the re-creation of knowledge—knowledge that matters. (pp. 175-178)

The authors note that Appreciative Pedagogy facilitates the exploration and formation of positive realities – students creating their own desired learning experience in the classroom on a daily basis that can guide behavior and transform the lives of the participants as they are empowered. Additional appreciative pedagogical work has been done in looking at instructional design (Norum, 2000), classroom management (Conklin, 2009; HoShing-Clarke, 2009), and the transformative learning in critical thinking processes that takes place when using AI with possibilities for application in classrooms (Wood, 2006).

Extension of Appreciative Inquiry and the appreciative philosophical stance has broadened created possibilities. Examples include a project yielding movement away from bullying tendencies in a Norwegian primary school class (Wigestand & Hauger, 2007); professional training of Palestinian teachers (Holman, 2004), evocative coaching in the transformation of schools (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010), examining what infuses energy into the environment of community colleges (Henry, 2005; Stetson & Miller, 2004) and a publication by

Cockell and MacArthur-Blair (2012) which serves as a consummate resource for higher education. Professor Ray Calabrese and his cadre of students and associates have created a new niche in applying AI as a methodology to look at specific educational issues. These have included: (a) preparation of school administrators (Calabrese, Roberts, McCleod, Niles, & Berry, 2008); (b) teacher development (Calabrese, Sheppard, Hummel, Laramore, & Nance, 2006); (c) administration of doctoral programs (Calabrese, Zepeda, Peters, Hummel, Kruskamp, San Martin, & Wynne, 2007); (d) an inquiry into the benefits of social inclusion of students with disabilities (Calabrese, Patterson, Liu, Goodvin, Hummel & Nance, 2008); (e) examining beliefs of teachers and administrators in regard to at-risk students (Calabrese, Hummel, & San Martin, 2007); (f) building social capital in a school and university partnership (Calabrese, 2006); (g) empowerment of middle school teachers (Calabrese, 2008); (h) description of teacher peak experiences (Hummel, 2007); (i) recognizing the positive core of elementary school teachers (Glasgow, 2008); and (j) examining alternative high school students' high point learning experiences (San Martin, 2008). Carr-Stewart and Walker (2003) used AI with Canadian school superintendents to examine their lives and what it meant for their leadership and delivery in schools. As represented by the variety of educational practices cited, Appreciative Inquiry has been used to benefit education through the process of discovering, valuing and building capacity.

In an article entitled *Strengths Based Whole Systems Change in Schools*, Hinrichs, Rhodes-Yenowine, and Schiller (2003) call for re-formation of the U.S. pre K-12 education system through the co-construction by the whole system. Using AI and focusing on whole system change, schools "encourage diversity of thought, creativity, inclusiveness, and positive outcomes" (p. 4). Rhodes-Yenowine (2003) states that "the educational system is a living system" (p.3) and that, while schools typically do not see themselves as learning organizations, they should begin doing so and invest in development of their organizations along the same lines as the private sector. She suggests that AI be used by schools organizationally to bring out the best. She believes that the use of AI (a) would re-form schools based on strengths; (b) which would serve as a base for forming a unique spirit of education; (c) that would spread throughout the school; and (d) create a school culture where through the use of dialogue, exciting worlds of learning are created. In his work in the Philippines, Dr. Loida Nidea (2002) advocates for building organizational capacity by using AI throughout the school organization, making it a system-wide collaborative competency. He believes that utilizing AI could bring transformative change capability to schools.

Whole school application of AI has been limited; however, the February 2007 issue of the AI Practitioner includes articles providing insights in using AI in schools over time. Ringshaug Primary School in Norway stands as an example of using personalized education so that students can achieve their maximum potential. Their use of AI "focused dialogues to enable teachers, staff and students to talk about what is working well in a school and what could be even better" (Nesje, 2007, p. 1).

It is interesting that this school did not decide to use AI due to problems. The school was functioning ably. During the AI process, the faculty, staff and school leaders were engaged in exploring, discovering, activating and expanding the organization's positive core; the result was a school community that demonstrated an energetic empowerment in their delivery of education. The impact on the people working at the school was clear – staff and faculty reported a more positive environment and having more energy and passion for their work. Participants expected a lasting impact in holistic thinking: the school as a community, everyone a contributing part of the whole, working toward a common goal and focusing on what works; and this leading to sustainable changes in personalized learning and a direct benefit to students. School leaders noted that the work focus had changed from a problem-focused to a solution-focused culture by using appreciative management (Luth-Hanssen & Haavimb, 2007). The school organization will change at the speed of the people's ideas and as they perform at their best to make them come true—in the manner of a learning organization (Luth-Hansen, Hauger, & Nesje, 2007). Ringshaug School not

## Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

only used AI as a tool for working with staff, but also as a way of working with students and parents in the belief that it helped in the learning to master life itself (from *Appreciative Pedagogy*, Yballe & O'Connor, 2004). The success of AI throughout the Ringshaug school has inspired its use in other schools in the region of Norway.

David Cooperrider (1996) in his early article *The Child as an Agent of Inquiry* compared the child's sense of wonder to a perceived lack of such in organizational development. In his work with Appreciative Inquiry, Cooperrider opened the door for organizations to join in the search of wonder and, even more importantly, prescribed a process and practices enabling organizations to create the climate for doing wondrous work. Subsequent AI work by professionals in the area of OD has built a base of knowledge and practice that would allow this valuable work to proliferate. The development of Appreciative Organizing and Appreciative Leadership are key foundational pieces to supporting this important work. In light of the lack of work in applying Cooperrider's metaphor, one might wonder why schools have not already engaged in this work to make the child an agent of inquiry. Perhaps what is missing is leadership.

## SUMMARY

Chapter Two described a social constructionist epistemology and its kindred action research methodology, Appreciative Inquiry as these relates to my professional experience.

Appreciative Leadership (AI) was contrasted with the more hegemonic Cartesian individualist orientation to social life. AI was introduced as the theoretical research perspective for this study.

I presented an overview of the search methodology and a synthesis of that research which highlighted the use of AI, Appreciative Organizing, the development of Appreciative Leadership as an organization tool, and the possibilities for using AI in schools. Read together, these sections suggest the possibility of using Appreciative Inquiry in developing Appreciative Leadership in schools as a way of supporting them in facing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Chapter Three includes the methodology, purpose of the study, research questions and design, research participants, data collection methods and procedures, and the analysis of the data using an AI research design.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH STRATEGY

This chapter details the research methodology used for this qualitative case study. It includes the research design and methodology, the purpose of the study, research questions, context, unit of analysis, role of the researcher, methods, data analysis, and research quality. I begin with the research design, methodology and purpose of the study. This is followed by restating the research questions and describing the context of the study, units of analysis, role of the researcher and the methods used for data collection. Next, the data analysis procedures and efforts to ensure the quality of the research are explained.

### RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This was a qualitative case study research design built upon an AI Learning Team Process (Glasgow, 2008, Hummel, 2007; Ludema et al. 2003; San Martin, 2008; Watkins & Mohr, 2001) which employed the first four stages of a 5-D Cycle—Define (Appreciative Leadership), Discovery, Dream and Design. The learning team<sup>1</sup> who participated in an AI Learning Team Process was comprised of the full Colegio Maya Core Administration Team that served together from 2002 to 2008. The team members included the school director, business manager, elementary and secondary principles and counselor. They were invited and volunteered to participate in the AI Learning Team Process over two days (Appendices 12& 13). The object of the Learning Team Process was to discover both their individual and the team's best school leadership practices; and, to identify those which are congruent with Appreciative Leadership and may be of future service. The CM Core Administration Team hoped to build upon a recognized positive core and to dream for the future possibilities of leading for positive change while using Appreciative School Leadership. Similar to an AI Summit, an AI Learning Team Process provides data through an emergent iterative process by conducting semi-structured participant paired interviews, participant group discussions, and participant created documents.

Barrett and Fry (2005), state that "AI is a strength-based, capacity building approach to transforming human systems toward a shared image of their most positive potential" (p. 25). During the Appreciative Inquiry, the Core Administration Team (1) discovered their Appreciative Leadership strengths; (2) envisioned and dreamed a future for effectively leading a school; and, (3) suggested a framework design for school leadership. The emergent design of the study utilized an iterative dialogical process that was consistent with the phenomena examined and the goals of the study.

The rationale for using AI was its potential for generating positive change through a co-constructive process that gives life to organizations and larger human systems (Cooperrider & Avital, 2005). As AI Learning Team members were asked to identify peak organizational experiences and relate positive images, a positive organizational culture was promoted. According to Yaeger and Sorensen (2005), this process improves individual, team and organizational performance. A social constructionist stance was used to respond to the data that was generated

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<sup>1</sup> The terms learning team, team members et cetera are used interchangeably with Core Administration Team to enhance readability.

through an iterative design. The significance of the iterative design of the AI Team Learning Process is that it allows for the valuing of naturally occurring phenomena through the way in which people socially construct their world (Reed, 2007).

The purpose of this study was to explore how the CM Core Administration Team members that worked together from 2002 to 2008 describe their high point experiences as school leaders and to discover practices that are congruent with Appreciative Leadership. My study also explored how this group of CM core administrators describe their dreams and design for employing Appreciative Leadership for the future of CM.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following question guided my study: What is the value of Appreciative School Leadership? Key concepts of Appreciative Leadership have been established; but Appreciative School Leadership has yet to be fully explored and identified. To help ameliorate this situation, I asked the following questions:

1. As members of the CM Core Administration Team from 2002 to 2008 describe their effective high point leadership experiences, are these congruent with established formal Appreciative Leadership concepts?
2. How do the members of the former CM Core Administration Team describe their dreams for leading while using Appreciative Leadership strategies in the future?
3. How do members of the 2002-2008 CM Core Administration Team describe the ecological conditions necessary for the use of Appreciative Leadership?

### CONTEXT

The research study was conducted with the Colegio Maya Core Administration Team that served together during the period of 2002 to 2008. Colegio Maya (CM), also known as the American International School of Guatemala, is an independent international non-profit school with a curriculum compatible with the United States and located in Guatemala City, Guatemala in Central America. The school is governed by a 9-member Board of Directors elected for 2-year terms by the Colegio Maya Association which is made up of the parents of the attending students. Typically, members of the Board of Directors reflects the current American, International and local Guatemalan populations of the student body. Membership in the Association is automatically conferred on the parents or guardians of children enrolled in the school.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement, a division of AdvancED and accreditor of the largest number of schools throughout the world accredits Colegio Maya. The Guatemalan Ministry of Education and an active member of the Association of American Schools in Central America (AASCA) also recognize it. Its mission is to offer a program of studies to prepare students for success in the U.S. university system. Recognizing the transient nature of the student body, the school's curriculum enables students to transfer between Colegio Maya and other U.S. international and Guatemalan schools.

The average yearly enrollment is 330 students in grades pre-kinder through twelfth grade, representing more than thirty countries with the largest student representation from Korea, United States and Guatemala. The average student stay at CM is 2 to 5 years due to the preponderance of international families with short-lived job assignments. CM maintains a college-preparatory focus, offering a rigorous curriculum with several Advanced Placement classes while also recognizing and promoting the unlimited talents and multiple intelligences of every student. The school's vision



## Chapter Three: Research Strategy

states that CM is a community of active learners that seeks academic excellence, celebrates diversity and empowers students to find their voices as leaders for a more peaceful world. Colegio Maya believes in educating lifelong learners by:

- Fostering a safe, caring and joyful environment;
- Celebrating the diversity of the Colegio Maya family;
- Creating responsible world citizens;
- Encouraging a socially and environmentally aware consciousness;
- Preparing for a changing technological world;
- Stimulating curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking; and
- Affirming the students' right and responsibility to explore their potential (Colegio Maya, 2010).

Though CM is a relatively small school with small class sizes, a wide range of facilities is available for student learning which include a performing and fine arts center with specially designed classrooms for art, music and drama as well as library and athletic facilities. The facilities demonstrate a commitment to a healthy mind, body and spirit (NSSE School Renewal Survey, 2007).

The instructional staff is predominantly from the United States and received their teacher training there. There also is host national faculty and a few teachers from other countries. Apart from the few teachers who have made Guatemala their home and have been at CM anywhere from 10-30 years, teachers, like their students, tend to stay at CM from 2 years (initial contract) to 5 years, then move on. The faculty averages 8-10 years of experience as an educator.

The most frequent reasons given by faculty for joining CM have to do with the quality of the school and its programs and the cultural richness of Guatemala. Faculty members are attracted despite a comparatively low school pay scale, social instability and the security challenges faced by Guatemala. School members participate in local cultural activities such as community service, fine arts and athletics, but otherwise keep a low profile for security reasons.

### UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The unit of analysis for this case study was the five CM administrators who had joined the Core Administrative Team during 2002 to 2008 and who chose to participate voluntarily in the first four phases of an AI 5-D Cycle. Data was collected using the following iterative: participant group discussions, semi-structured participant paired interviews, participant created documents and a participant created proposal for incorporating Appreciative School Leadership.

The CM administration team members are experienced educators. Their tenure in education averages over 25 years and they have worked at CM for over 15 years. All members have earned advanced degrees in education and regularly attend professional conferences, often as content presenters. The general director is hired by the nine-member community-elected Board of Directors and is responsible for overseeing the running of the school in all of its functions while working together with the other members of the Core Administration Team in support of programming for student learning. The business manager is responsible for the overall financial health of the institution as well as the supervision of all non-instructional school personnel. The elementary and secondary principals are responsible for and supervise their respective level programs. The counselor provides academic and personal counseling to all students and personnel. Each member meets regularly with the school director in order to address specific programmatic needs. Together, the members come together once a week for a regularly scheduled meeting to address school issues that affect the school. The Core Administration Team also serves as the school's Crisis Response Team in times of emergency.

Precursory to beginning the research a Google Group was formed to provide for efficient communication between group members in sharing key information related to the AI Team Learning Process. Participants were invited to sign the consent form (Appendix 14).

### ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

My primary role as researcher was participant-observer. The role of participant-observer combines participation in the lives of the people being studied with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data (Fetterman, 1998). As participant-observer, I was able to participate in non-passive observations while maintaining an insider's perspective. The participant-observer researcher role is particularly well suited to qualitative case studies (Yin, 2009) in allowing the researcher to take on a variety of roles within the study that fall between the two distinct roles that are implied.

My position as a researcher was one of an insider/actor (Reed, 2007), part of the culture being studied, which was a part of the dynamics of the research process. As the curriculum facilitator of CM, I was familiar with the context of the study, which enabled the promotion of an environment of collaboration in conducting the Appreciative Inquiry with the CM Core Administration Team. As participant-observer, I facilitated participants' activities throughout stages define, discovery, dream and design of the AI 5-D Cycle in seeking to bring out the best of the participants (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The last step of the AI 5-D Cycle, Destiny, was not completed, due to this CM Core Administration Team having disbanded. Participants described their high point Appreciative Leadership experiences, their dreams for effective leadership and their proposed designs for utilizing Appreciative School Leadership. Throughout the AI Team Learning Process, I strove to be a good listener, adaptive, flexible, to ask appreciative questions and to interpret the answers. I endeavored to have a firm grasp of the issues being studied, and to minimize but also acknowledge bringing my own biases to the study (Yin, 2009). I avoided being invasive, allowing activity and responses to occur naturally (Hatch, 2002).

A high standard of participant privacy and confidentiality was maintained. Data collected during the study was viewed only by my advisor and me. To maintain anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to the participants and used throughout the treatment of data in the dissertation.

Participants were informed of the structure and expectations of the study as well as their rights. Consent forms were voluntarily completed by the participants.

### METHODS

In this section I explain the methods used to gather data for this research. I begin with an overview of the methodology. I next describe the protocols used in Day 1 of the 5-D Cycle – the Define Stage and the Discovery Stage. Then, I explain the protocols for Day 2 of the 5-D Cycle – the Dream Stage and the Design Stage. To finish, I give further details about how participants generated their documents and the utility of their work.

#### OVERVIEW

This research project employed an AI methodology with specific protocols for generating data. Reed (2007) noted that "AI is not only an organizational development approach useful for taking organizations forward, it also has the potential to contribute to research-derived knowledge" (p. 47-48), especially when examining naturally occurring phenomena within its context. The AI methodology, derived from the Appreciative Inquiry Summit methodology by Ludema et al. (2003)

has been used by Glasgow (2008), Hummel (2007), and San Martin (2008) to address issues in education in stimulating change.

Within the AI methodology used in this project, data was generated through whole group discussions, semi-structured participant interviews and participant created documents. Data generation and collection were continuous throughout each of the stages during the two days of the AI Team Learning Process, as guided by established protocol (Appendices 15-39). A participant workbook termed a “Thought-Catcher” paralleled the established protocol and was developed specifically for this event to guide the sequential steps of the Team Learning Process (Schiller & Lemke, 2006; Fifield, 2009). The AI Team Learning Process was also a fit as a methodology due to its interactive and experiential nature matches my strengths as an experiential facilitator.

### **METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION, DAY 1 – DEFINE STAGE**

In the first stage of the AI 5-D Cycle, I, as the facilitator, briefed the group on the goals of the AI Team Learning Process, the framing of Appreciative Leadership (AL) and the structure of conducting the Appreciative Inquiry. The AI 5-D Cycle, as opposed to the more common AI 4-D Cycle, makes use of the initial Define stage to articulate the focus for the Appreciative Inquiry (Watkins & Mohr, 2001). Appreciative Leadership themes (Schiller et al., 2001), formative ideas (Whitney et al. 2010), and principles (Lewis & Moore, 2011) were shared with participants to support their understanding of the concept prior to moving on to the Discovery stage (Appendix 11).

### **METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION, DAY 1 – DISCOVERY STAGE**

I used semi-structured participant paired interviews, group discussions and participant created documents for Day 1, the Discovery stage. In appreciating the best of the leadership practices that CM by the Core Administration Team employed, participants were asked to focus upon times of organizational and individual excellence and to recount their experiences (Cooperrider et al., 2005). Details of the conditions, structures, dynamics and practices that allowed the life-giving properties to flourish were encouraged (Watkins & Mohr, 2001) and shared within the group.

#### *Semi-Structured Paired Participant Interviews*

Semi-structured paired interviews involve two participants interviewing each other. AI questions and protocols were developed to guide the participants throughout the AI process. The purpose of the interviews is to (a) gather data in a rich narrative form that highlights the positive core; (b) shift the focus of study in the direction of the questions asked; and (c) provide the participants and the group a sense of inclusion, cooperation and concern for each other’s ideas. The AI questions were crafted in line with traditional AI protocols (Cooperrider et al., 2005; Ludema et al., 2003; Watkins & Mohr, 2001; Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney, & Fry, 2004) and focused on individual and team high point leadership experiences. Participants were provided with a Thought-Catcher handout to record reactions to the open response AI questions during the semi-structured paired interviews. The AI questions are stated in Appendices 17, 21, and 24 with corresponding protocols in Appendices 18, 22, and 225. These served to maintain consistency during the interviews.

### *Whole Group Discussions*

Whole group discussions were used in an iterative follow-up step to the semi-structured paired interviews of the AI methodology. Participants came together for a collective sharing of their highpoint stories. The whole group discussion allowed everyone to better understand the focus of the Appreciative Inquiry. The group participated in generative learning in developing a collective understanding of the Appreciative Leadership practices that were characteristic of the educational program at CM during 2002 to 2008. Whole group discussions additionally provided a chance for the group to review ideas that were presented and to complete a member check validation of agreement. The protocols for conducting the first day Discovery stage whole group discussions are specified in Appendices 19, 20, 23, and 26. As a culminating activity for the Discovery stage, the group created a mythic metaphor to represent the work that they had completed together. The worksheet and protocol for this exercise are in Appendices 27 and 28.

#### **METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION, DAY 2 – DREAM STAGE**

The second day began with a review of Day 1 and an overview of the tasks for Day 2 was presented (Appendix 29). The AI Learning Team participated in semi-structured paired participant interviews for the Dream stage of the AI 5-D Cycle on Day 2. Participants were asked to envision what optimal school leadership might look like in the next five years. Notes of the interviews were captured in the participant Thought-Catchers for sharing in the whole group discussion to follow. During the whole group discussion, members shared their partner's vision of school leadership for the future, recording the highlights and life-giving properties (Watkins & Mohr, 2001) on a posted chart. The members then created an opportunity/concept map (Ludema et al., 2003) of the data previously captured which represented a positive guiding image of school leadership for the future.

Based on the comparison with the themes, formative ideas and principals of AL, the participants created a group document that identified the future school leadership practices that were congruent with Appreciative Leadership. This information served as a precursor to the subsequent participant created documents in which the group constructed a Dream Statement for envisioning optimal future school leadership at CM. The AI guiding questions are stated in Appendix 30 with the protocols for the AI methodology for Dream Stage listed in Appendices 31 through 33.

#### **METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION, DAY 2– DESIGN STAGE**

We used a whole group discussion with the AI Learning Team to create a possibilities map based on the previously constructed Dream Statement to begin the Design stage of the AI 5-D Cycle on Day 2. After introducing the concepts of appreciative organization design and taking into consideration the formal organizational design elements (Ludema et al., 2003) which are stated in Appendix 34 and Appendix 35 (respectively), a Design Possibilities Framework was completed by the AI Learning Team. The group brainstormed and identified the formal organization design elements that they believed would influence the accomplishment of the Dream Statement (Appendix 33).

Based on the resulting Design Possibilities Framework, provocative propositions were (collaboratively) crafted by the AI Learning Team. Those propositions represented how the group imagined Appreciative School Leadership to work in an ideal organization. These propositions stemmed from the positive core and affirmatively addressed what the school would look like if it were designed in a way “to expand positive potential and unleash ever-higher levels of performance” (Ludema et al., 2003, p. 182) with Appreciative School Leadership. The protocols for

the action steps completed in the Design Stage by the AI Learning Team are found in Appendices 36 and 37. In closing the Team Learning Process (Appendix 38), a final reflection and valuation activity was conducted for participants to provide feedback related to the Team Learning Process (Appendix 39).

All AI Team Learning Process activities and participant created documents from Day 1 – Define and Discovery stages and Day 2 – the Dream and Design stages were used to answer the research questions as participants: (1) described their high point leading experiences and identified those practices that were aligned to Appreciative Leadership; (2) detailed their dreams for effective school leadership; and (3) prescribed the conditions necessary for this to happen. In the following section, I describe how I conducted my data analysis.

### DATA ANALYSIS

Activities for Day 1 and Day 2 of this study were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The participant created documents that included the poster lists of high point experiences and Appreciative Leadership practices, metaphors, timeline, dream statement, opportunity/concept map, news story and provocative propositions were transcribed electronically for inclusion in the database. Given that existing theory and research relevant to Appreciative Leadership is still in its infancy, I used an approach to content analysis that combined the conventional and directed approaches. The goal of conventional content analysis “is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomena under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 34) while directed content analysis is used to validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory (Hsieh, 2005).

Data analysis varied according to the specific needs of the research questions. The task for the first research question was to determine whether the participant effective high point leadership experiences were congruent with established formal Appreciative Leadership concepts. Therefore, I decided to use the formal Appreciative Leadership themes identified by Schiller et al. (2001) and Appreciative Leadership formative ideas by Whitney et al. (2010) as pre-determined typologies in a typological analysis of the qualitative data. The typological analysis included the following steps as per Hatch (2002):

1. Identify typologies to be analyzed;
2. Read the data, marking entries related to the typologies;
3. Read entries by typology, recording the main ideas in entries on a summary sheet;
4. Look for patterns, relationships, themes within typologies;
5. Read data, coding entries according to patterns identified and keeping a record of what entries go with which elements of the patterns;
6. Decide if patterns are supported by the data, and search the data for non-examples of patterns;
7. Look for relationships among the patterns identified;
8. Write your patterns as one-sentence generalizations;
9. Select data excerpts that support your generalizations.

Initially, I analyzed typological data by content analysis, looking for patterns or themes in the data (Patton, 2002) that correspond to the AL themes from Schiller et al. (2001) and the AL formative ideas from Whitney et al. (2010). Data was reviewed frequently for immersion and to get a sense of the whole (Tesch, 1990). A close reading of the data followed, word-by-word and line-by-line in an open coding process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The established codes were sorted into categories and sub-categories (Patton, 2002). Definitions were developed for each category, sub-category and code with exemplars related to the research questions (Merriam, 1998). I used axial coding (Charmaz, 2009; Straus & Corbin, 1990) to link categories that I found related. Finally, I

combined Appreciative Leadership themes from Schiller et al. (2001) and formative ideas from Whitney et al. (2010) as the key concepts for identifying the final typological categories (Appendix 40).

For the second research question asking how the participants described their dreams for leading with Appreciative Leadership strategies in the future, I conducted a typological analysis using the Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership as identified by Whitney et al. (2010) as the pre-determined typologies (Appendix 10).

Working with the third question was straightforward. I reported on the ecological conditions necessary for the use of Appreciative School Leadership as stated by the participants.

### RESEARCH QUALITY

Data were gathered throughout the AI 5-D Cycle stages of define, discovery, dream and design as the participants interacted in the AI Team Learning Process activities. Close adherence to strategies used to establish trustworthiness in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1985) ensured rigor and quality. The iterative strategies of triangulation and member checking added credibility. Several data collection methods: semi-structured participant paired interviews, whole group discussions and the participant created documents, facilitated triangulation of data. Member checking, a group method used for confirming accuracy, was used in all of the discovery, dream, and design AI stage activities.

A compact and precise description of data is provided. I have opened the door for different types of exploration and research. In assuring dependability of this study, I developed protocols for the data collection procedures throughout the AI stages and triangulated the data collected from them. Finally, confirmability was ensured through the opportunities provided for reflexivity by the participants and the triangulation of data collected in an evolving process throughout the stages of the AI process.

### SUMMARY

The intent of this qualitative case study design was to explore the successful Appreciative Leadership practices at CM from 2002 to 2008 according to the Core Administration Team; and to identify the ecological conditions for these to be sustained and extended in the leadership of the school. This chapter described the research design and methodology for this qualitative case study. It clarified the role of the researcher as participant/observer in the AI research methodology; and methods for data collection and analysis were detailed. The rigor of this study was addressed by reporting on the use of several quality assurance strategies for trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PURPOSE, THEORY & METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter, I first recapitulate the purpose of the study and theoretical perspectives that guided it. Second, I present the methodology, research questions, and analysis of data, and then I summarize the results of the study. Results are given in two parts: (1) the first describes the two days of the AI learning team process; (2) while the second presents the findings consisting of responses to research questions supported with participants' narrative texts that emerged from the data. I conclude with a summary of the chapter.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to explore how members of the Colegio Maya (CM) Core Administration Team depicted their high point experiences as school leaders, discovered strategies congruent with Appreciative Leadership (AL), and portrayed Appreciative School Leadership at CM. As a final product from the Appreciative Inquiry Team Learning Process, CM core administrators were asked to elaborate their dreams and their design for employing AL for the future of CM.

### **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

As a research model with social constructionist roots, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) served as both the theoretical perspective and the research methodology for this study. As a collaborative, positive, and strengths-based approach to building capacity, AI makes use of the best of the past and present through narrative experiences, while empowering participants to dream and look toward designing a desired future that represents a shared destiny (Cooperrider et al., 2003; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Appreciative Leadership (AL) as an extension of the AI theoretical perspective focuses upon Appreciative Leadership practices that marshal the transformative potential of a strengths orientation to power difference-making in performance (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, 2010, p.28).

### **METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study was a qualitative case study conducted as a two-day AI Learning Team process (Ludema et al., 2003). As such, it was an action research case study.

The AI Learning Team consisted of the five CM Core Administrative Team members apart from myself (as the facilitator) serving together during 2002 to 2008. The iterative process of the adapted 5-D Cycle included only the first four (define, discovery, dream and design) stages, omitting the destiny stage because the participants were no longer working together.

Appreciative Inquiry focused the participants on socially constructed knowledge as they affirm and appreciate the best in each other, their organization, and the context of their work (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003). The successive stages of this inquiry permitted validation of the information by the participants. The AI research design was flexible and emergent, while attending to the contextual experiences of the participants in their address of high point leadership experiences.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A central question guided this inquiry: What is the role and value of Appreciative School Leadership? To address the paucity of formal concepts describing Appreciative School Leadership, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. As members of the CM Core Administration Team from 2002 to 2008 describe their effective high point leadership experiences, are these experiences congruent with established formal Appreciative Leadership concepts?
2. How do the members of the CM Core Administration Team describe their dreams for leading while using Appreciative Leadership strategies in the future?
3. How do members of the CM Core Administration Team describe the ecological conditions necessary for the use of Appreciative Leadership?

## DATA ANALYSIS

Multiple techniques were used to analyze the data collected in this study. These were selected to meet the specific needs of the research questions.

The first question asked whether the effective high point leadership experiences of the participants were congruent with established formal Appreciative Leadership concepts. I decided to perform a typological analysis of the qualitative data using the formal Appreciative Leadership themes identified by Schiller et al. (2001) and the Appreciative Leadership formative ideas by Whitney et al. (2010) as pre-determined typologies. The following steps were used in the typological analysis (Hatch, 2002):

1. Identify typologies to be analyzed  
The themes from Schiller et al. (2001) and formative ideas from Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, and Radar (2010) were combined according to their shared similarities into the following five typologies (Appendix 40):

Typology	Schiller et al.	Whitney et al.
<b>I.</b>	<i>Leaders are belief-based with explicit spiritual orientation and practices;</i>  The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Values, Affirmation, Belief in fellows,  Personal Spirituality – faith based and Personal Meaning Systems.	<i>A positive world view;</i>  The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: A way to see the world, people and situations;  To see the best in people; Treat with respect and dignity regardless of race, age, gender, etc.; and Positive potential.
<b>II.</b>	<i>Leadership lives in the group, not in any one person;</i>  The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Team Leadership, Envision,	<i>It's about relational capacity;</i>  The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Confluence of relationships, People come together to



	and Collective Discovery.	make things happen, Bringing together strengths, resources, and capacities, and Collaborating to create/co-author.
III.	<i>Multiple truths exist in ways of thinking, doing, and being; (Schiller et al.)</i>  The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Multiple paths, Discovering alternatives, Customized solutions, and Question the status quo.	
IV.	<i>Appreciative Leaders have an unwavering commitment to bringing out the best in themselves and others;</i>  The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Appreciation, Encouragement, Validation, Appreciative dialogue, Challenge, Enable, Coach and Support people's best talents.	<i>It turns potential into positive power;</i>  The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Positive core, Positive potential, turned into positive power to make meaningful contributions.
V.	<i>Appreciative Leaders find generative forces in their many circumstances and multiple systems;</i>  The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Generative language and conversations, Creative approaches, Inspiring new ventures, Questioning and listening, 'Think out of the box', holistic connections, and Continual learning.	<i>Sets positive ripples in motion;</i>  The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Through words, actions, and relationship waves of positive change ripple outward in creating positive possibilities.

2. Read the data, marking entries related to the typologies.
3. Read entries by typology, recording the main ideas in entries on a summary sheet.
4. Look for patterns, relationships, themes within typologies.
5. Read data, coding entries according to patterns identified and keeping a record of what entries go with which elements of the patterns.
6. Decide if data supports patterns and search the data for non-examples of patterns.
7. Look for relationships among the patterns identified.
8. Write patterns as one-sentence generalizations.
9. Select data excerpts that support your generalizations.

The second research question asked how the participants describe their dreams for leading while using Appreciative Leadership strategies for the future. Another typological analysis was performed, this time using the following Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership as identified by Whitney et al. (2010) as the pre-determined typologies:

1. **INQUIRY** - Ask positively powerful questions.  
*Inquiry lets people know that you value them and their contributions.* When you ask people to share their thoughts and feelings – their stories of success or ideas for the future – and you sincerely listen to what they have to say, you are telling them, “I value you and your thinking.”
2. **ILLUMINATION** - Bring out the best of people and situations.  
*Illumination helps people understand how they can best contribute.* Through the practices of illumination, you can help people learn about their strengths and the strengths of others. You give them confidence and encouragement to express themselves, take risks, and support others in working from their strengths.
3. **INCLUSION** - Engage with people to coauthor the future.  
*Inclusion gives people a sense of belonging.* When you practice inclusion, you open the door for collaboration and co-creation. This, in turn, creates an environment in which people feel they are a part of something. When they feel part of something, they care for it.
4. **INSPIRATION** - Awaken the creative spirit.  
*Inspiration provides people with a sense of direction.* By forging a vision and a path forward, you give people hope and unleash energy. These are the foundations for innovation and sustainable high performance.
5. **INTEGRITY** - Make choices for the good of the whole.  
*Integrity lets people know that they are expected to give their best for the greater good, and that they can trust others to do the same.* When you lead with integrity, people know they can depend on you to connect them to the whole. Your example sets a standard for others to follow. (pp. 23-24)

The third research question asks about the ecological conditions necessary for the use of Appreciative School Leadership.

The quality of the research was assured by careful attention to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Cuba & Lincoln, 1985). For credibility, member checking was used throughout activities of the discovery, dream and design stages. Both credibility and dependability were maintained through triangulation of data collected through semi-structured participant paired interviews, whole group discussions, digital recordings, and participant created documents. I kept a journal during the AI learning team process and shared the data and findings with all participants to further guarantee confirmability.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Analysis of the data yielded four salient findings. In the next section (REPORT OF FINDINGS) each of these findings will be reported separately with rich descriptive quotes from participants exemplifying the finding.

Finding 1: The process of conducting an Appreciative Inquiry into Appreciative School Leadership resulted in the participants feeling empowered and energized with a new sense of purpose and dedication as well as feeling valued and desiring to carry forward the same.

Finding 2: CM Core Administrative Team members used concepts congruent with Appreciative Leadership to create a generative holistic learning community interested in empowering members to make a positive difference in the world.

Finding 3: The CM Core Administrative Team describes leadership strategies for the future that are congruent with Appreciative Leadership in the use of strategies that embody Inquiry, Illumination, Inclusion, Inspiration, and Integrity.

Finding 4: In order to employ Appreciative Leadership effectively, the CM Core Administration Team prescribed the necessary ecological conditions for the school community to adopt Appreciative Inquiry as the recommended approach/framework for school leadership.

## REPORT OF FINDINGS

This report of findings appears in two sections. The first section, the Overview of the AI Learning Team process, recounts the stages of the Appreciative Inquiry conducted into the use of Appreciative Leadership by the CM administrative core team. This section informs the process for obtaining the data related to the research questions. A summary of the benefits for conducting the AI learning team process is included. The second section presents the results of each of the subsequent three findings in response to the research questions.

In support of the findings, participant quotations are provided for understanding enrichment. Pseudonyms used to identify the participants are derived from Mayan history. Table 4.1 provides a brief profile of each of the study's five participants (Appendix 41).

**Table 4.1 Participants** (all Pseudonyms)

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
Ixchel <i>Rainbow, earth, &amp; moon goddess</i>	Retired School Director; 40+ years' experience in education as teacher and administrator in the U.S. and internationally; PhD in educational leadership; adjunct professor; recipient of various awards; 9 years of working at CM
Chac <i>Rain deity</i>	Secondary Principal; 40+ years' experience in education as teacher and administrator; Master's degree in education; 24 years of working at CM
Yumil <i>Maize god</i>	Business Manager; Bachelor's degree in business; 28 years of working at CM
Kinich <i>Sun god</i>	K-12 Guidance Counselor; 30+ years' experience in education as a teacher and counselor; Master's degree in counseling; 14 years of working at CM
Huna <i>Promoting unity</i>	Elementary Principal; 18 years' experience in education as a teacher and administrator; Master's degree in education; 8 years of working at CM

**FINDING 1:** *The process of conducting an Appreciative Inquiry into school leadership resulted in the participants feeling empowered and energized. This was congruent with the CM administrative core team's prior mode of operation in their past work together. Participants emerged with a new sense of purpose as well as feeling valued and desiring to carry forward the same in their future work.*

## THE AI LEARNING TEAM PROCESS

### *Day 1: Define and Discover—Getting Started*

There are many ways to conduct an Appreciative Inquiry. Given the focus of this study, I chose an AI Team Learning Process (Ludema et al., 2003) as the form of engagement because it allows a small group of people interested in a specific topic to participate in an AI process. I also chose the AI Team Learning Process for its power to involve participants, which strengthens their relationships and empowers them in their practices (Ludema et al, 2003). Participants readily agreed to participate in the two-day weekend retreat, seeing it as an opportunity to re-connect and to participate in some energized group learning. This process allowed for the participants to come together to reflect upon their educational leadership practices, individually and collaboratively, in (a) discovering their competencies and strengths; (b) envisioning opportunities for positive change; and (c) designing desired changes into a school's organization. As the participants no longer worked together but continued working in support of education, they envisioned the intended results from this AI Team Learning Process to be useful for future educational applications.

The AI Team Learning Process was held by invitation on the weekend of June 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at *Las Tres Gracias* belonging to Ixchel, in Antigua, Guatemala. The beautiful and spacious home is located at the base of a dormant volcano and incorporates many interesting flower and fruit bearing gardens, local and international artifacts and art as well as spaces for conversation in the climate of the land, eternal spring.

Participants arrived between 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m., moving themselves into the available guest rooms entitled *milagro* (miracle), *la paz* (the peace), *esperanza* (hope), and *pasión* (passion) for their overnight stay. Coffee, tea, juices and natural food fare were laid out for snacks throughout the day. There was a joyful camaraderie among participants along with intense interest and curiosity about what lay ahead.

After initial greetings, I outlined the schedule for the day and for the weekend. A ritual from past times of working together was held as an opening mixer activity. Each person selected an “angel card” for personal reflection and group sharing. Angel cards provide inspirational messages and meditations to help us look at the world in ways that infuse our lives with vitality. They assisted us in attending to our levels of understanding, creativity and caring. Next, I invited the members to list their high point events at CM during 2002 to 2008 on a time line poster placed on the long table. As the participants became excited and anxious to begin, they delved wholeheartedly into the activity, initially brainstorming events aloud to invite comments from the rest of the members.

The result included these highlights:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>2002</b> | Crisis Management Procedures developed<br>Talents Unlimited Training<br>ESOL in the Mainstream Training provided through-out the school<br>School Profiles begun<br>“Catch the Spirit” slogan developed<br>Safe Passage Community Service relationship started<br>School Values identified<br>Hunger Banquet held |
| <b>2003</b> | Tecpan School Improvement Plan developed<br>Annual Leadership Saturday event is begun<br>“I love to read” Month is initiated<br>Star Student Assemblies are held  |

	Programs developed for maintenance staff – Employee of the Month, Employee own savings and loan bank set up, Scholarship program for their children, Anchor Papers and Student Writing Portfolios begun
<b>2004</b>	Understanding by Design is introduced to faculty Essential Questions are promoted Atlas Curriculum Mapping is initiated Senior Reflection Essays become part of the end of year activities Model United Nation Peace Day Celebrations are begun
<b>2005</b>	School-wide Reads begun Core Team Reads begun School-wide themes begun – International day celebrations Senior Portfolio Presentations begun Hunger Banquet held Vision Statement created
<b>2006</b>	Wellness School-wide theme is incorporated throughout the year Use of SMART Goals implemented
<b>2007</b>	Huna and Chac attend the Principals Training Center First Aid & CPR Courses offered to all employees– Used for electrocution accident 3 Minute Walk-throughs initiated and presented at conference
<b>2008</b>	MAP (Measures of Academic Performance) testing initiated Principles Training Institute attended and completed by Huna and Chac 50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of CM

This activity was to encourage a sense of shared ownership and to create a safe setting for the weekend team process. It provided an opening for the participants to begin their recollection stories in an environment of shared-storytelling, including an opportunity for commentary on each story from various participant perspectives. The overall feeling was one of celebration of the good work accomplished.

Participants made themselves comfortable in a well-lit living room with high ceilings. Notebooks, pens, markers, poster sheets, computers, and manipulative toys were readily available. Many chairs, couches, and large pillows in the formation of a circle afforded ample options for personal comfort.

I presented an overview of the two days and the objectives for the AI learning team process. Prior to this meeting, I had set up a Google email group to open communication with the group concerning this weekend and informal discussions amongst the participants had already begun. So, when we sought group consensus to establish a Full Value Contract – the group’s essential agreements to guide the attitude and behavioral expectations for the group activities, the group responded that they expected to conduct business as they always had done, valuing shared discussions “at the center of the table.” They further requested that we begin the day with the HLTT (“Hey! Listen To This!”), an activity which had always begun weekly administrative core team meetings. HLTT allowed everyone present to share whatever thoughts or learning, typically positive, that were at the forefront of their minds. The HLTT exercise allowed the group to begin the AI learning team process in a familiar, positive and appreciative mode.

### *D-1: Define Stage*

Before beginning the 4-D process, I presented a review with attention to the specific 4-D stages (of a typical 5-D AI process) forthcoming in this study. The group also reviewed the principles of AI provided in their thought-catcher packets (participant workbook). Because members had previously participated in school events where I facilitated the use of AI, members were familiar with the operational concepts and purpose of using AI.

To make AI principles more personally meaningful, participants were asked which of the principles resonated most strongly with them. Chac identified “*We grow toward that which gives us energy.*” For Kinich it was “*What we choose to study makes a difference.*” Huna chose “*Words create our world,*” while Yumil selected “*Positive questions lead to positive change.*” Ixchel elected two AI principles: “*Wholeness brings out the best – Gathering stakeholders together stimulates creativity and builds collective capacity*” and “*Diversity creates more robust imagining.*” While participants saw the value of all the AI principles, they agreed on the primacy of “*Relationships support our most creative work.*”

Since the Defining stage was the starting point for this AI, I explained the formal ideas of Appreciative Leadership (AL) according to Schiller et al. (2001) and Whitney et al. (2010). I also provided the positive and Appreciative Leadership principles spelled out by Lewis and Moore (2011) as supporting background.

I checked and affirmed participant understanding of AL before moving on. Participants saw value in conducting an AI and voiced interest in applying the AI learning team process beyond the weekend reunion.

### *D-2: Discovery Stage—Semi-structured Participant Paired Interviews*

The goal this stage is to discover *the best of what is*. That means focusing on what we already do that works and brings value and energy to the game.

For this study, participants engaged in semi-structured paired interviews that would incentivize them to discover the positive core of leadership practices at CM during the time period of 2002 to 2008. Semi-structured paired participant interviews are a means of building connections between group members during the inquiry. The objective is discovering forces and factors that allow them to be their best. The thought-catcher workbook provided guiding questions for the interviews. Participants were encouraged to “conduct the interviews with curiosity and wonder”—seeking their partners’ stories and probing for details. Interviewers also were asked to keep notes in the thought-catchers about their partners’ stories for sharing in a whole group discussion after the interviews.

Since the CM administrative core team consisted of five participants, interview groups fell into one group of two people and another group of three people. As three sets of interviews took place during the exercise, rotation of group membership allowed every person to interact with every other person in the interviews. I allotted forty-five minutes for groups to conduct their interviews but this was flexible.

The physical layout of the house and garden offered tranquil, intimate and inspiring spaces for holding interviews. Participants appeared engaged and excited in the storytelling and a question and answer exchange of the interviews. They were well self-moderated and included equal sharing by the participants. Given the close relationships shared by the members and their familiarity with the interview process, the interviews were conducted efficiently and within the guidelines provided. All interviews and discussions were recorded for transcription. Drawing from the environment and the respectfulness shown to each other, the AI Learning Team Process allowed for a nurturing effect amongst the participants.

As mentioned prior, three rounds of paired interviews were held during the Discovery stage. Each used a different way of framing and examining effective high point leadership. After each session of interviews, the full group was convened and facilitated to: (1) share their stories; (2) discuss and make meaning of them; and (3) review them for evidence of Appreciative Leadership as identified during the Define stage.

The first round of paired interviews asked participants to reflect upon high peak experiences at CM, detail what made them so and share what leadership was necessary to make them possible. Ixchel and Yumil shared the story about the Affirming Multiple Intelligences Field Day; Huna shared her story of learning about, implementing, and presenting a conference on the use of the 3-Minute Walk-throughs as an evaluation tool; Kinich told about showing the film “An Inconvenient Truth” in celebration of Earth Day and a second story about the implementing a “Let’s Get Real” anti-bullying campaign; while Chac gave an account of developing the CM Vision and a second story about using reflection in disciplinary situations.

As all members of the CM administrative core team had participated in or had some knowledge of these events, the discussion focused on clarifying the “who, what, when, where and how” of making these happen. They reviewed the stories for congruence with the individual themes and formative ideas of Appreciative Leadership and these were noted on poster paper in the front and center of the group. The group noted that all of the AL themes and formative ideas were represented in the stories but found the most prominent theme to be *Leadership lives in the group, not in any one person*. The group also agreed that the stories illustrated the following positive and Appreciative Leadership principles presented by Lewis and Moore (2011):

- (a) Leadership as getting out of the way;
- (b) Leadership as being bold and taking risks;
- (c) Leadership as an emergent, iterative, learning process.

Al learning team members performed a “member check” to confirm the stories and for congruent AL evidence that had been presented, discussed and posted on the poster sheets.

The second round of paired interviews asked questions about high point leadership by the administrative core team *as a team* and asked what specific strengths and contributions could be attributed each team member. Interestingly, these stories were more robust in their depth and discussion and were not always centered on feel-good themes.

Ixchel told about the Hunger Banquet with the highlights as a leader of believing in your people, as she was not present for the event. She noted that, under core team leadership, the event was well planned, inclusive, prompted larger thinking and action, involved teamwork, required support throughout, made use of reflection, and created awareness, empathy, humbleness and compassion.

Yumil articulated a story about building the performing arts center. Highpoints included community enthusiasm, teamwork of committees with specific tasks, an inclusive vision of leadership, inclusion of voices – especially the students, a transparent and shared process, trust and commitment among members and trust in the process, a belief in the whole and use of such innovative strategies as fundraising and including the students during the construction process.

Huna spoke of professional development efforts that empower all stakeholders to grow while respecting the perspectives of each group. She believed that follow-up discussions of the 3-Minute Walk-throughs with the faculty and staff showed this to be an authentic form for giving wings to personnel in taking ownership for their own professional development.

Kinich recounted the creation of the Crisis Response Manual. She highlighted the collaborative approach, bringing issues to the table, flexibility to switch position/role according to need, constant review, volley of ideas, proactive and reactive emergency meetings. She highlighted the sense of commitment by all in the shared focus of making meaning of the issues at the center of the table. She also said that the shared nature of leadership in the administrative core team was less

stressful because it was supportive. There was a high set of standards but also an underlying trust that all will work at their best and, therefore, a willingness to share what's on your plate with the rest. Kinich appreciated the mutual professional development within the group, the sharing of the positive and good stories/books, and the sense of each member valuing each other's contribution toward the group's collective intelligence.

Chac recalled a precarious and challenging student situation requiring united decision making and action, collaboration, demonstrating and upholding principles, confidentiality, taking responsibility, clear communication, taking a stand, transparency, the ability to ask for help and support without fear, and integrity.

The group again noted that all of the AL themes and formative ideas were represented in the stories as a whole, yet not all of them were evident in each story. They recognized that the following AL themes/ideas/principals were prominent:

**From Schiller et al.:**

- (a) Leadership lives in the group, not in any one person;
- (b) Multiple truths exist in ways of thinking, doing, and being;
- (c) Appreciative Leaders have an unwavering commitment to bringing out the best in themselves and others.

**From Whitney et al.:**

- (d) It turns potential into positive power;
- (e) Sets positive ripples in motion;

**From Lewis and Moore:**

- (f) Leadership as balance between control and direction;
- (g) Leadership as belief in the value of everyone's voice and experience;
- (h) Leadership as recognizing the centrality of shared importance;
- (i) Leadership as inclusion;
- (j) Leadership as searching for what works.

AI learning team members performed member check to confirm the stories and the AL evidence that had been presented, discussed and posted on the poster sheets. After this second round of interviews, group members commented that they felt an evolving sense of togetherness.

The third round of paired interviews required participants to reflexively reflective, to consider questions about *their own* leadership strengths and contributions as they recounted what a high peak experience in leading. At first, participants seemed restrained by modesty in speaking candidly about themselves in exclusively appreciative and positive terms. However, with some encouragement, they were able to make their personal statements.

Ixchel spoke proudly of the weekly core leadership team meetings highlighted for her by the shared reads, shared leadership, creating sacred space and time, promoting synergy, creation of a positive team, the purposefulness, informing; seeking to learn, to be our best, to do what was best; reflection, empowerment and celebration. Her second story was about delivering the General Assembly Report to the greater school community with a sense of professional pride and appreciation of all we accomplished during the year and recognizing the efforts of all of the stakeholders.

Yumil felt most alive when attending to a specific bus accident which emphasized management of the crisis, problem solving, consideration of roles and personnel, delegation, knowledge-based judgment and decision-making, financial expertise, and unequivocal support.

Huna was pleased to share her view of recently entering the position of principal and being a part of promoting a climate of active learning in all. She was proud of maintaining an open door



policy, use of interpersonal intelligence, promoting positivity, active listening, and being supportive in this position.

Kinich felt alive in fulfilling multiple job roles and expectations while doing exemplary work with the advisory and student leadership programs. Her strengths and contributions were organizational skills, teamwork, commitment & discipline, communication, working relationships, getting the job done from start to finish attitude, high expectations, integrity, and coaching skill set.

Chac felt most alive in guiding the senior class with their senior portfolio and presentations. She highlighted her abilities of communication; coaching; motivation; extension and building of respect; celebration, sense of humor, empathy, and sensitivity. The group felt proud that all of the AL themes and formative ideas were represented in the stories, though again, not every story related directly to every theme and idea. They recognized that the following AL themes/ideas/principals were prominent:

**Schiller et al.:**

- (a) Leadership lives in the group, not in any one person;
- (b) Multiple truths exist in ways of thinking, doing, and being;
- (c) Appreciative Leaders have an unwavering commitment to bringing out the best in themselves and others;
- (d) Appreciative Leaders find generative forces in their many circumstances and systems;

**Whitney et al.:**

- (e) It's about relational capacity;
- (f) A positive world view;
- (g) It turns potential into positive power;
- (h) Sets positive ripples in motion.

**Lewis and Moore:**

- (i) Leadership as relational;
- (j) Leadership as balance between control and direction;
- (k) Leadership as belief in the value of everyone's voice and experience;\
- (l) Leadership as recognizing the centrality of shared importance;
- (m) Leadership as integrity;
- (n) Leadership as searching for what works;
- (o) Leadership as being bold and taking risks;
- (p) Leadership as an emergent, iterative, learning process.

AI learning team members performed a member check to confirm stories and congruent AL evidence that had been presented, discussed and posted on the poster sheets.

The group noted that the theme: *Leaders are belief-based with explicit spiritual orientation and practice* was not highly recognized during any of the three rounds of interviews but acknowledged that there was a spiritual orientation that often stemmed from Ixchel's leadership and that it was embraced to varying degrees by the members of the team. The group affirmed each other's strengths and attributes during this exercise. Throughout all three rounds of interviews, the participants demonstrated an intense attitude of valuing each other for their past work and for their dialogue together during the interviews and the group discussions.

### *Mythic Metaphor*

Mythic metaphors are an important way of visualizing a connection in a spiritual fashion between people, events and circumstances. Following the semi-structured participant paired interviews in the discovery stage of the AI learning team process, the participants were asked to first create an individual mythic metaphor for their leadership characteristics and then to collaboratively create a group mythic metaphor based on the individual metaphors. The participants requested that since the objective was to create together a group mythic metaphor that they be allowed to skip the step of creating individual metaphors and to spend more quality effort and time in the creation of a group mythic metaphor. Given their demonstrated work performance, the entire group agreed.

To begin the activity, Ixchel jumped up to take the marker in hand and to document the ideas on the poster sheets in front of the group. The group agreed that they would mix words with visions in trying to best capture their metaphor. Huna started by suggesting something with a circle, which Ixchel built upon by proposing a water wheel because, its function is life-giving when combined with water. Chac agreed with the concept of water, especially as it invoked visions of the ocean or a wave. In this stream of thought, Huna associated water in giving or as energy. Yumil noted that this image for her represented and created synergy which was refreshing and dynamic. Ixchel noted that the water wheel can function 24/7. For a moment, Ixchel encouraged us to consider other possibilities, nature, natural forces, and the rainbow; something that is empowering. She then reminded her colleagues to think of the school vision, the pieces of it: voice, excellence, and peace ... Huna re-directed everyone back to the water wheel as she felt it was empowering, thoughtful and creative.

The group agreed that their metaphor for the CM Core Administration Team leadership is a waterwheel that creates energy, works together, uses water as a stream of life force, and functions 24/7. The wheel is comprised of the various stakeholders with the spokes representing the relationships forged from the hub, which is the administrative core team. The water as it enters the water wheel represents the students and teachers which will exit in the form of graduating students who will be entering a new world with energy to make a difference. The teachers will continue to make the difference, at CM or at a new school as they move on. In its final form, the mythic metaphor created by the CM administrative core team states: "A water wheel empowering thoughtful, creative, caring citizens." In review of their work (as a member check) the group was in complete agreement and satisfied that the exercise of creating the mythic metaphor as well as the end product was indicative of the AL themes, ideas and principles.

### *Day 1 Summary*

As the work session closed for the day, the group reviewed their work. First, they reviewed the formal concepts of Appreciative Leadership that had been presented during the Definition stage of the AI learning team process. Next, they created posters for each of the post-paired interview discussions and these were reviewed for accuracy and completeness. The group then completed one final member check of the congruence of the documented evidence with the AL themes, ideas and principles. In preparation for the continued work with the Dream and Design stages, the schedule for the next day's work was overviewed. Satisfied with their performance, the group adjourned their AI learning teamwork for Day One.

### *Day 2: Dream & Design*

As participants finished their morning rituals, they made their way to the central long table to begin their second day of the AI learning team process. Energy was already high as members were sharing highpoints of the preceding day's activities and the thoughts born from them during the evening's rest.

Since the participants had reviewed the posters from the prior day's work before sitting at the table, they were asked if they felt any edits were necessary. They agreed that none were needed and they were ready and willing to get started on the new tasks of the day. I previewed the day's schedule and introduced the work of Day 2: building upon the positive image created during the Discovery stage by moving on to the Dream and Design stages asking us to concentrate on positive action.

#### *Dream Stage*

The Dream stage is intended to engage participants in moving beyond the status quo to envision valued and vital futures (Ludema et al., 2003). Recognizing that our dreams are our hopes and what moves us forward in the future, the participants were asked to participate in a paired interview that included two parts.

Based upon the stories shared during the Discovery stage, they first were challenged to imagine *ideal school leadership* and to identify three wishes for creating it. For the second part, believing that dreams can come true and focusing on them we move closer to realizing them, participants were asked to imagine that they had left CM for five years and that upon their return, they find that it is functioning as they had dreamed. They were asked to describe what was happening upon their return and to describe what had happened to make it possible. The participants eagerly entered into this round of interviews.

As the group came together for sharing their ideas and discussion, some participants commented that they were excited to have this opportunity to create a vision for the future. As each member recounted their partner's dreams and three wishes, Ixchel documented these on the central poster board.

From the beginning, the group wanted to create a graphic of concentric shapes to represent their wishes. As group members shared their wishes, these were discussed for possible inclusion. In the graphic representation, a center circle was labeled *Future*. The second was more the shape of a heart and contained three wishes: (1) Culture of Passion; (2) Culture of Celebration; and (3) Culture of Reflection. The larger enveloping concentric circle was entitled: *Vision – Everyone is a Leader*, and contained the following wishes:

- Strong knowledgeable leader (a fit for the school)
- Ethics matter
- Teams
- Voices heard
- Good decisions
- Healthy resources

Team members reported a sense of accomplishment in collaboratively constructing this representation of desired dreams for creating ideal school leadership.

The second task was to imagine the school five years hence and the group decided to create a list of desirable characteristics by extracting them from each member's interview responses, subject to group consensus. The exercise relied on the following scenario in the interview guides in their thought-catcher workbooks:

Imagine you have left CM for other pursuits but have come back to CM to celebrate a school anniversary. The year is now 2016. As you continue your tour through CM, you look around and see that the CM community is functioning as you dreamed it might—in support of optimal student learning. What is happening? Describe what has helped it to happen. What is different? How are the students learning? What do the classes look like?

The captured group responses on the central poster were:

- CM has an AI Director who inspires and walks his/her talk
- Strong teams with vision and purpose creating a healthy school where the BEST in everyone is alive!
- Students have taken ownership for their own learning
- Students have more choices and resources and mentoring to be more prepared to be leaders for and in a peaceful world
- Technology is a vibrant tool for learning and change and connecting
- Ethics are articulated
- School has MayaTalk.com, which is its own social networking site dedicated to conversations pertinent to community learning interests
- Students are challenged and supported to be more creative
- Passion Centers – students choose cross-grade level-MI-individual learner profiles
- Balance is practiced and valued
- Life Skills – reflection, commitment to values
- Peer Problem solvers
- Classroom meetings/forums
- Parents enjoying learning about learning

The responses reflect attention to all of the stakeholders—students, teachers, faculty/staff and parents—in creating a dynamic learning environment.

After the participants had the opportunity to share their three wishes and the descriptions for the imagined future, they were asked to use the data from the flipchart to collectively create a dream statement of the ideal future vision of school leadership. The first step was the communal creation of an opportunity map (Ludema et al., 2003). Participants suggested opportunities and concepts that they felt were most strategic. The association of these with the community stakeholder groups was taken into consideration. In synchronicity, the participants recognized that the diagram that had been constructed during the mapping exercise represented their desired wishes as a true representation of their dreams as they created the final dream statement: *Appreciative Leadership guided by vision promotes a culture of passion, reflection and celebration of learning shared by all.*

### *Design Stage*

The Design stage focuses on the “social architecture” of the organization to allow for building on the positive core and dreams already established (Ludema et al., 2003). Social architecture refers to the structures, strategies, systems, and processes that must be considered in addressing potential and performance. The group was charged with creating a Design Possibilities Map (Ludema et al., 2003) based on the previously constructed dream statement. This process

allows the participants to identify the design elements that they believe have the highest potential for supporting the realization of the dream statement.

The group brainstormed about what organizational relationships help or hinder realizing this dream. As well, they asked how realizing this dream might help or hinder certain organizational relationships. They also brainstormed about formal organizational design elements that would affect achieving the dream. From examples reaped, the group selected organizational design elements that they felt were a priority. It was important to balance individual passion and the needs of the whole community. The group's work at this stage was serious and more solemn but still seemed gratifying. While the conversation centered on the need for a positive thrust, comments arose sporadically about the actual possibility of this dream happening.

For the final activity of the Design stage, group members were asked to write provocative propositions based on the previously identified high-impact design elements. Provocative propositions, according to Ludema et al. (2003, p. 181), "are expansive statements of how organizational members plan to organize themselves in pursuit of their dreams". The propositions represent principles and commitments of the ways that people are committed to work together. They are provocative in describing the ideal organization, which typically challenges the status quo while suggesting real possibilities for change. The propositions are grounded in reality and have the promise of possibilities. The group chose to write these collectively, as opposed to a two-stage process of individual writing and a later review by the whole group. Ixchel facilitated at the front of the group with a flipchart and marker. She began by asking the group to: (1) brainstorm ideas; (2) weave the ideas into sentences; and then (3) reflect and refine on what had been written. The group was reminded to adhere to the guidelines of good propositions supplied in the thought-catchers.

The propositions were crafted into a statement suggesting future actions for the school. In doing this, the group first established a shared agreement in, "We believe that good leadership is a shared process." As such, the group conclusively stated:

Appreciative Inquiry is the desired approach/framework to empower the delivery of leadership in a school:

1. Where formal communication systems are in place that are transparent, trustworthy, grounded in constructive, thoughtful principles;
2. which fosters relationships which empower people to feel valued, encouraged, and capable;
3. that is aware of and grounded in current reality and promotes positive change seeking most vibrant and futuristic tools to realize it; and
4. seeks provocative questions/inquiries that promote awareness and liberation.

For the provocative propositions, the group detailed school leadership practices required for support of those propositions. Group members reviewed the provocative propositions and supporting detailed practices for accuracy and confirmation through member checking. The group was delighted in their product. Consensus was they had produced a thoughtful and complete masterwork.

### *Summary of Day 2*

The CM administrative core team members began the day with a review of their Day 1 work to capture their positive core of leadership. Through extensive dialogue from pair interviews and whole group discussions, the group collaborated to collectively dream and design a possible future for school leadership at CM that includes Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership.

*Finding 1 Summary: Benefits of AI Learning Team Process*

The Appreciative Inquiry into Appreciative School Leadership resulted in the participants feeling empowered and energized with a new sense of purpose and dedication. They reported feeling valued and subsequently desiring to carry this process forward into their future work whether at CM or elsewhere. Consistent with the use of AI for the research design and the theme of investigation, participants were asked to complete a reflection and valuation at the end of the two days. The purpose was to provide an opportunity to reflect on sharing stories, dialogue, and planning and to identify what was most valuable. Here are questions asked and sentiments expressed in response to them:

- 1) *What about the Appreciative Inquiry strengths-based approach most enlivened you?*
  - It provided a forum for five people I cherish that are struggling with their worth and work to be good leaders to focus on their cores and share their power and regain hope to be all they can be.
  - The experience for me was rejuvenating and insightful. I feel empowered to really think about how to use many of the ideas in my practice and how perhaps we can regain some of the things in the current situation.
  - Getting in touch with the positive leadership in me.
  - Relational nature – connections – synergy.
- 2) *Thinking back on the last two days and moving forward, what Inspires you?*
  - Being around people who have experienced what positive leadership was/can do in a school;
  - Sharing ideas and brainstorming about what leadership is and can be in today's world;
  - To look bring back passion into my daily work and the need to celebrate others more;
  - This process inspires me to want to learn more about it.
  - To think about the application of this process around the world;
  - That we are articulating this work in a way that others around the world can use it as inspiration and guide to become Appreciative Leaders.
- 3) *Thinking back on the last two days and moving forward, what Challenges you?*
  - To remember to apply the AI principles to my daily routine in becoming a better leader;
  - To continue to walk my talk;
  - In seeing the bigger picture – the future of the school and how to turn it around;
  - To apply the AI cycle into specific areas of my work and my life;
  - My personal responsibility to the positive core of AI in my personal life and as a leader.
- 4) *What aspects of the AI Learning Team Process have you found most valuable?*
  - Continuing to seek what works;
  - The tools used during the process;
  - Working as a team and use of questions and reflection;
  - The positive energy created;
  - Time to think, produce, and connect.

One member left these powerful words in a final note: "You have given me hope!"

## FINDING 2 IN RESPONSE TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

*Finding 2: CM Core Administrative Team members used congruent Appreciative Leadership concepts to create a generative holistic learning community interested in empowering members to make a positive difference in the world.*

During the discovery stage of the AI learning team process, the participants recounted and reflected upon high point experiences as school leaders. First in pairs and subsequently as a whole group, they discussed how these experiences related to individual and group leadership practices. In addition, they reviewed and validated the identified leadership practices in terms of matching with the formal concepts of Appreciative Leadership.

To evaluate whether the identified leadership practices matched the formal concepts of Appreciative Leadership, a typological analysis was performed. The relationships found from performing a typological analysis utilizing the formal Appreciative Leadership concepts by Schiller et al. (2001) and Whitney et al. (2010) are presented next along with supporting participant narrative.

*Typology 1: Leaders are belief-based with explicit spiritual orientation and practices; AL is a positive world view;*

CM Core Administration Team members shared a belief in valuing a holistic and inclusive collaborative learning community that is able to create something special and better together. Inherent is a belief in the empowerment of human beings to grow and move forward while being reflective. Ixchel told of the time when all of the school personnel, from the secretaries to the teachers to the maintenance staff, participated in a full day of professional development dedicated to learning about multiple intelligences (MI) as the school had adopted this framework for “being smart”. According to Ixchel, “we were trying to affirm multiple intelligences that we really believed.” Huna recalls:

It was about learning the multiple intelligences framework and we had to do four workshops throughout the day, morning and afternoon, and I remember being asked to go to a workshop that pushed the limits. It maybe wasn't a normal part of your intelligence but you were to explore the different intelligences. This day was a result of team effort in planning. We felt it was very successful and creative amongst everybody. Everybody was involved: teachers, maintenance and administration, and even the board. We were in our glory with the feeling of purpose in creating that sense of community and getting everyone together. It gave us all some sort of pride that we all tried things out of our comfort zone but yet, we were proud of our accomplishments at the end of the day. I remember creating connections and synchronicity as a whole group. As a whole school community, I think we did that, that day!

In commenting on this day and activity Ixchel noted,

We really used our framework that we were saying was important as a definition of smart and everybody got a chance that day to go to two or more different workshops. We also ate together. I just thought what a fabulous affirmation of our diversity, of community, of professionalism, of showing people. But just the fact that we did it and that when I think about the people surprising themselves and a lot of people being pushed going to things they weren't very good at. We were a community and for me, I think, we remembered it and tried to use it.

For Yumil it was this and more:

I think it was not only just being a community; it was just giving, each one of us, a sense of pride and discovering things that you probably don't feel comfortable doing but then you try and you do it!

This story of the day dedicated to the learning and sharing of multiple intelligences by the entire faculty and staff exemplified the Core Administration Team's beliefs, commitment and passion for building a positive worldview. From this story and others, it is clear that they not only believed in these ethical values but also modeled them to make a difference. The CM Core Administrative Team was not explicitly spiritual in a religious sense; yet it was so in honoring the expansive and liberating power of the inclusive whole.

*Typology 2: Leadership lives in the group, not in any one person; AL is about relational capacity;*

The CM Core Administrative Team subscribes to the notion of placing matters at the "center of the round table" for team members to gather around equally to come to terms with issues or the everyday work of leading the school. While a round table was used for regular weekly meetings, it also served as a platform for working towards a shared vision for the school and for the human good.

Huna stated that the contribution of this leadership model was the availability of "the diversity of ideas in being able to get everyone's perspective and help in planning." Kinich shared, "that was an approach to collaboration where we can unite efforts when the other person needs that, and I think it was OK to shift energy when someone needed attention."

The purpose of the model was to keep student learning at the center of the table—including current issues and best practices to proactively benefit of the school. Shared experiences born of this process included: (a) the adaptive use of the Three Minute Walk-through for teacher supervision and teacher development; (b) paying attention to larger issues by holding Hunger Banquets and global warming awareness activities; (c) putting the multiple intelligence framework into practice; (d) building a performing arts center; and (e) addressing the issue of bullying, in part by using the film program *Let's Get Real* throughout the school community. Kinich noted how the rollout of the anti-bullying program was integral to the message to the kids "that they are responsible for the culture that they want to have in their own reality."

This model was extended to bring stakeholders or representatives of their interests to the table and to attend to those interests by direct inclusion or through ongoing communication. The round table mechanism also allowed for the CM Core Administrative Team to engage quickly and efficiently in problem-solving. After 911, for example, the school proactively formed a Crisis Response Plan and a team to manage it. Kinich recounted:

We organized the crisis management manual. Then we decided who the crisis management team was going to be and then I start learning about the debriefing model to be used after a crisis. I think that at that time we were able and we continue— I hope—to provide that sense of leadership in the community that we are ready. I was saying I hope that we continue doing that because I don't know if parents know how prepared we are and that we have different plans according to the various situations.

I remember when the teachers received the manual that many of them approached me saying how amazed they were just because we have seen almost all these situations. I think that everyone on the core team did their part. They clearly know where the decision-making comes from at the time of an emergency and they know what their roles are.

Ixchel best summed up the spirit and the efforts of the Team:



We were seekers, we were always seeking, asking, learning, trying to do what was best for the kids, the teachers, for the school; and I think we were always asking ourselves, reflecting, looking for ways of empowering the school to be our best.

*Typology 3: Multiple truths exist in ways of thinking, doing, and being.*

In the search for best practices and creative solutions, the CM Core Administrative Team modeled the principle of multiple truths their ways of thinking, doing and being and the seeds of this model dispersed relationally to others. Examples mentioned: (a) the development and use of the Three Minute Walk-through, (b) adoption and implementation of the multiple intelligences framework, (c) application of the *Let's Get Real* anti-bullying program, and (d) Hunger Banquet enactments. With exactly the intent to provide a learning experience for students, faculty and staff, the organization and holding of the Hunger Banquets was powerful in examining the multiple truths in ways of thinking and doing.

Even Ixchel, who was absent for family reasons, was moved to share why the first Hunger Banquet made her most proud of the school and its leadership:

For me, the Hunger Banquet was enormous. The first big one I missed because I wasn't there [at the school] and I heard unbelievable stories about it and that everybody was included – students, teachers, the maintenance staff, how the cafeteria participated, stories of how all the maintenance people said a prayer, how one of them who ended up at a richer table went to share his food with those who got only a tortilla and not just with maintenance.

I was so sad that I was away and missed it. I didn't need to be there and it was just, I mean, all that some parents talked about. I remember one of our prominent, long term and "high profile" parents saying "it changed our dinner table conversations. I could not believe it, you let elementary kids participate. It really was a school-wide hunger banquet and you guys pulled it off." There was a phenomenal learning reflection for the kids after and, from afar, I was so proud of the school and that you did it and really sad that I wasn't there. My own learning experience was that for me it was a phenomenal example of leadership when you know you can share leadership and the whole school being a part of it. What a significant thing to do!

Kinich proudly tells of the idea to hold a showing of the documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, and how this spawned, among other environmental initiatives, the adoption of "Every day is Earth Day" as school-wide theme. Huna remembers:

I think it was probably one of our best year-long themes because of its long-lasting impact with kids. The following year for the writing of our Anchor papers all the kids in elementary wrote about the environment and our prompt had nothing to do with the environment. They wrote about how important it was to take care of the earth, composting, recycling and everything we had done the year before. This in turn had such a huge impact as well on the "I Love to Read Month" that year, which was very impactful.

Team members agreed that the manner of creating the school vision statement represents the quintessential example of Appreciative Leadership at CM. Chac recalled:

It was a participatory process, so we had students - I remember Elise, for example, and her strong voice. We had teachers. We had administrators. We had parents and we had board members. The meetings were early in the morning and it was wonderful to see how the students responded and came early.

I just remember us throwing out tons of ideas and the way a parent guided us through all of the ideas, ideas, and more ideas and how each time we came back together we would narrow them down to get to where we finally got.

For me, what was most successful was that it came from a group. For me the best part was the student voice. Elise comes to mind. There were other kids but Elise was like this: “we are the voice”.

Anyway, for my part, I was allowed to voice my opinion as well. I think my involvement was important in feeling a part of something, part of the school, part of something that was very important. That made it quite exciting, even though, as I said, sometimes there were Mondays that I was like: “Oh my God, are we ever going to finish?” But ... to see how there were a hundred things on that whiteboard that first time when we were asked *What is CM?* It was amazing how all of us kept pouring through it to reach the final realistic product. I really feel like the end product was the voice of different people in school, different groups that were given the chance.

Throughout, the CM administrative core team promoted the use of reflective practices with stakeholders to move beyond resolving problems to a quest for self-improvement for the good of the individual, group and/or institution. The stories told by the participants’ exhibit the use of reflection throughout the school. Chac highlights its use in the handling of student discipline. Yumil and Huna note the efficacy of its use in employee evaluation and growth. At the same time, members of the school community have been urged to “Take a Stand” in using their voices.

Graduating seniors are asked to give a final portfolio presentation that showcases their multiple intelligences and truths while voicing what makes them special. These presentations often exhibit a looking forward to being the *vanguard* and making a difference. This, Kinich believes, is something the CM experience grows in its students.

*Typology 4: Appreciative Leaders have an unwavering commitment to bringing out the best in themselves and others; AL turns potential into positive power;*

The CM administrative core team established a culture that challenged and supported all stakeholders within the school community to be their best, regardless of position or function. Evidence of this abounds in the stories shared during the AI learning team process. While talking with Ixchel about the story about the whole school participating in professional development on the multiple intelligence frame work, Yumil recalled the attention paid to the maintenance staff and their families:

One of the things that impressed me and I thought was a lot of help for the maintenance staff was how you used to—even when you (Ixchel) were busy—spend time teaching them about the multiple intelligences. They really appreciated it. You can see that it was a new world for them to understand how these worked.

Ixchel: That was fun, and we talked about their kids, and letting their kids be multiply intelligent, yeah!

Yumil: And then also to open their eyes, as you have, to help them to promote all of the multiple intelligences, not just one. So I think it was really good for them to find that out and because it was a learning experience for them. Along with this, I grew personally because I was given the opportunity to grow with my organizational skills and in my decision-making. I had the support to grow and to organize the maintenance staff and really helped them to feel proud of what they do, other than being “just” a janitor and make them feel that they were important.

Ixchel: You know what we dropped? Where we missed the boat was when we tried but we didn’t follow up enough was with the Spanish collection in the library and access to both libraries for them.

Yumil: But they are still using their library cards!

Ixchel: Yeah! We gave them library cards and that was huge for them. But there should have been a little workshop or something for those on how to read to your kids and for them to be read to.

Kinich responded:

They knew they were such an integral and important part of our community. You saw them shining, glowing many times; and I think that those actions empowered them and they felt appreciated and then they gave even more to the school. I think that a momentum they had was to go that extra mile.

These stories highlight our commitment to supporting and bringing out the best in others.

When we decided to begin the Three Minute Walk-through initiative, we also decided it would be empowering for the principals to document its implementation and prepare the result for presentation at a regional educational conference. Kinich expressed the commitment of the school community members to making every day an Earth Day and how proud she felt “in bringing real life into the school.” Chac recalled difficult moments when dealing with a student discipline issue that rocked the whole school community while keeping an our commitment to bringing out the best of everyone and rather than focusing on the negative behaviors or apparent unfair local realities. The approach embraced in the anti-bullying program did exactly that and was accepted and successful.

The CM Core Administration Team held themselves as well as other members within the school community to high expectations. Three members of the Core Administration Team came to their positions from the CM teaching ranks. Team members participated in professional development and were expected to share their individual learning with the larger community. Chac and Kinich noted that the school’s being came alive as the community created and embraced the school’s vision. During the school’s general assembly, at the end of each year, the school director stood before school stakeholders and proudly celebrated the fine work done by every part of the school, making the school the best it could be.

*Typology 5: Appreciative Leaders find generative forces in their many circumstances and multiple systems; AL sets positive ripples in motion.*

According to Schiller et al. (2001), there should be evidence of generative language and conversation, creative approaches, new ventures, acute questioning and listening, *thinking out of the box*, holistic connections and continual learning. Whitney et al. (2010), posits that Appreciative Leadership sets positive ripples in motion, meaning that positive words, actions and relationships spread outward creating positive possibilities.

From analysis of data, I found evidence that the CM Core Administration Team that had served together from 2002 to 2008 practiced Appreciative Leadership by the typological criteria above. A spirit of positive collaborative inquiry was cultivated by bringing issues for reflection, questioning, and dialogue “to the center of the table” for united action. Action efforts to benefit student learning were done with an eye toward *paying it forward* to benefit the school, community, and betterment of the world holistically. The stories shared by the participants during the AI learning team exercises:

- Three Minute Walk-Through supervision and teacher support mechanism by the principal;
- Multiple Intelligence framework in valuing that people may be ‘smart’ in many ways;
- *Let’s Get Real* anti-bullying program that included a video presentation followed up with advisory group debriefing conversations;

- *Every Day Is Earth Day* school-wide theme that lead to several ‘green’ school initiatives;
- Student behavior that typically required very little formal disciplinary measures;
- Professional development for all employees that encouraged the development of their strengths and multiple intelligences;
- Construction of the school vision statement
- Development of a Crisis Response program for school emergencies;

provide the evidence. All of these stories reveal the process involved—from creation of the ideas to brainstorming, to planning and organizing, to execution and/or application, to reflection and evaluation. They also reveal the depth and breadth of participation necessary and freely given in a culture of Appreciative Leadership. The sweet succinct quotes from these stories are poignant while being representative. Yumil recalls the process of building the performing arts center:

...which was a huge project and it was a leap of faith in not having the money to jump into it and that it required a whole leap of faith and trust and how practically everybody worked together to make it a reality; it was about us believing in our multiple intelligences.

Ixchel added, “Believing in the arts, we believe in the whole child.”

On the Three Minute Walk-through, Huna remarks:

I still meet people, actually just at the recent elementary principal’s conference one of the attendees was at our workshop and he really had gotten a lot out of that and still uses it today. So that made me feel good, that we did have a kind of a ripple effect that went out to a bigger community and that’s so important to me.

Chac was impressed with the leadership in creating the school’s vision statement, saying:

They were such listeners. They were listening and no matter what anyone said, even if it was bizarre or whatever, it was important and that’s the quality that I would probably most highlight of that process.

Kinich exalted the idea and practice of keeping the school “*en la van Guardia*” by “taking that jump, that leaping to something that was completely new at that moment” in order “to keep alive and dynamic the culture within” CM.

Ixchel summed it up:

It was out of a quality we wanted. We wanted to make it a better school, a more human school, a more caring school—all of those things. It was out of that desire. I think always, always, to become *better than*, not out of: “it’s broken, let’s fix it.”

### *Finding 2 Summary*

Analysis of the study’s data revealed that the high point leadership experiences described by CM team members during our AI learning team process corresponded with established formal Appreciative Leadership concepts. Pride in their accomplishments stems from a shared belief in creating a community of learners dedicated to growth and the joy of learning and in empowering others to *Catch the Spirit* that they had created. Upon performing a validation review of the stories and concepts presented during the AI learning team process, the participants noted how they had actually used Appreciative Leadership concepts in their practices without having the label or name that is what they were doing. They were very excited to know this and to learn the language and theory to address the concepts of Appreciative Leadership formally for their future use in schools.

**FINDING 3:** *The CM Core Administration Team describes leadership strategies for the future that are congruent with Appreciative Leadership in the use of strategies that embody Inquiry, Illumination, Inclusion, Inspiration, and Integrity.*

A typological analysis was performed on the data created by the AI learning team process during the Dream stage to determine if the suggested leadership strategies corresponded with Appreciative Leadership. The examined data was created by the group during the semi-structured paired participant interviews, group discussions, and the construction of a dream statement. The categories for this typological analysis were derived from the *Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership* by Whitney et al. (2010) which include *Inquiry*, *Illumination*, *Inclusion*, *Inspiration*, and *Integrity*. Evidence extrapolated from the data for each topological category follows.

### *Typology 1: Inquiry – Ask positively powerful questions.*

“Inquiry lets people know that you value them and their contributions” (Whitney et al. (2010, p.24). The spirit of inquiry is a way to look towards the future while valuing others and their thinking.

Looking at the data collected during the Dream stage, the strongest evidence meeting this criterion can be found in the team’s inclusion of *a culture of reflection* in their dream statement. To create a culture that values reflection implies a mode of questioning, individually and in collaboration, with focus on growing and becoming better. A mutual respect and appreciation is required for thinking and questioning in communication. In short, a culture of reflection suggests continual inquiry.

The team also suggested that students be challenged and that *students take ownership for their own learning*. The idea of “being challenged” while simultaneously “taking ownership for one’s own learning” implies that students will be inquirers in their quest to discover their own meaning.

### *Typology 2: Illumination – Bring out the best of people and situations.*

“Illumination helps people understand how they can best contribute” (Whitney et al., 2010, p. 24) as they learn about their strengths and the strengths of others. The participants not only included “teams” in their wishes during the Dream stage but also modeled the same in their work during the AI Learning Team Process, especially in celebrating each other’s strengths. The group collectively wished for “Strong teams with vision and purpose creating a healthy school where the BEST in everyone is alive!”

The wishes that “students have taken ownership for their own learning” and “students are challenged and supported to be more creative” strongly suggest a wish for a culture of illumination. Along with “passion centers,” these statements speak to the desire for illumination within students as well as for the teachers, parents and others who support them in working with their strengths. The dream of “parents enjoying learning about learning” further suggests embracing illumination in the development of interests and strengths. Taken together, a culture of celebration of strengths can prosper.

### *Typology 3: Inclusion – Engage with people to coauthor the future.*

Inclusion is the first step to “opening the door for collaboration and co-creation” (Whitney et al., 2010, p. 24). With a sense of being included come a sense of community and belonging and a sense of responsibility. In their dream statement for the future, the group spoke of “*a culture of passion, reflection and celebration.*” Constructing and sustaining a culture requires participation and participation requires inclusion.

Consider the following snippets from the data:

- *Strong Teams:* A requisite for this is Inclusion.
- *Everyone is alive:* Everyone is included in participating meaningfully.

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- *Students have taken ownership for their own learning; and Passion Centers:* Students have been included more equally in the learning process.
- *Technology is a vibrant tool for ... connecting:* The power of technology for connection and inclusion is amazing.
- *School has MayaTalk.com:* This idea was about having a central portal of technological interconnection for all members of the community so as to be included in school issues and efforts.
- *Peer problem solvers and Classroom meetings/forums:* Are all mechanisms to be inclusive in bringing people together.

Based on this Dream stage data, the group seems keenly attuned to the AL strategy of Inclusion.

### *Typology 4: Inspiration – Awaken the creative spirit.*

Inspiration, according to Whitney et al. (2010), provides people with a sense of direction that gives hope and unleashes energy, which are foundations for innovation and sustainable performance. Words taken from the Dream stage data that resonate with *Inspiration* are: (a) *culture of passion*; (b) *guided by vision*; and (c) *vision and purpose creating* all of which propose an inspired course of action. The group wishes for students “to be more prepared to be leaders for and in a peaceful world.” This certainly postulates *Inspiration*. Explicitly, the group desires an “AI director who inspires and walks the talk.” The entreaty for *Inspiration* is clearly spoken in the dreams and wishes for school leadership.

### *Typology 5: Integrity – Make choices for the good of the whole.*

Integrity is a way of being, say Whitney et al. (2010), that follows from the conviction that people, including oneself, ought to give their best for the greater good. The group was clear in expressing their dreams and wishes for a *strong knowledgeable leader who walks his/her own talk* while *ethics are articulated* and *everyone is empowered to be a leader*. An example is set and *shared by all* in *promoting* such a culture. From within the data from the Dream stage, evidence (the italicized words in the preceding sentences) shows that the CM Core Administration Team values and wishes for *Integrity* in their dreams for future school leadership.

### *Finding 3 Summary*

Analysis of data from the Dream stage of the AI team learning process indicates that the CM Core Administration Team portrayals of leadership strategies for the future are congruent with the Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership as described by Whitney et al. (2010). Evidence from the group’s expressed dreams and wishes was congruent with each of the AL strategies of *Inquiry, Illumination, Inclusion, Inspiration, and Integrity*. According to Whitney et al. (2010, p. 24) the utilization of the Five Core Strategies together “enables the mobilization of creative potential into positive power which sets in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance to make a difference in the world.” These same dynamics appeared within the group and were desirables expressed in their discussion of dreams for the future school leadership. I was especially fascinated that the group included explicit AI and AL language in their dreams when specifying their wishes for an “AI Director” and that “**Appreciative Leadership** guided by vision promotes a culture of passion, reflection and celebration of learning shared by all.” The group appears to have integrated these terms into their thinking and practice during the AI learning team process.

**FINDING 4:** *The CM Core Administration Team suggested that the school adopt Appreciative Inquiry as the desired approach for establishing the ecological conditions necessary for Appreciative Leadership.*

In the Design stage of the AI Learning Team Process, the CM Core Administration Team considered the extension and application of the positive core that had been built during the Define, Discovery and Dream stages. The team addressed the “social architecture – organizational systems, structures, practices, etc.” (Whitney et al., 2010) they believed would create a vibrant and enabling school environment that focused on positive performance. During the Design stage, the group created a *design possibilities map* based on the Dream Statement constructed by the group during the Dream Stage: “Appreciative Leadership guided by vision promotes a culture of passion, reflection and celebration of learning shared by all.”

In completing the design possibilities map, the group considered the key relationships in and outside the school that would impact or be impacted by the dream. The key relationships that the group identified were:

- Director with knowledge, compassion, skills and ethics to facilitate the healthiest school possible.
- Personal connections matter/people feel valued by the leadership culture throughout the community.
- Empowerment of students and teachers (together) so as to feel and to learn/grow/be successful.
- Board/director relationship is one of trust, support & vision.

Additionally, the group identified the elements of formal organization that would influence the accomplishment of the dream statement. For the school, the group listed:

- Policies that stipulate the roles of stakeholders to support the vision;
- Strategies that focus on the implementation of the vision;
- Ways to showcase/reflect on/measure learning;
- Activities promoting opportunities to develop respect and trust;
- Communication/feedback systems that honor and encourage community members to find their own voice;
- Expectations and competencies clearly articulated, resourced and formally reviewed.

Based on these design possibilities, the team wrote provocative propositions to serve as their statement suggesting future actions for the school:

Appreciative Inquiry is a desired approach/framework for good shared school leadership (1) where formal communication systems are in place that are transparent, trustworthy, grounded in constructive, thoughtful principles; (2) which fosters relationships that empower people to feel valued, encouraged, and capable; (3) that is aware of and grounded in current reality and promotes positive change seeking most vibrant and futuristic tools to realize it; and (4) seeks provocative questions/inquiries that promote awareness and liberation.

For support of the provocative propositions, the team also detailed the following school leadership practices:

- When leadership is a shared process –
  - Teams are inclusive when appropriate, including students, teachers, staff and/or parents;
  - Appropriateness is determined/monitored by the core leadership team.

- Appreciative Inquiry is the desired approach/framework to good leadership. In order to make this functional the following is needed:
  - Selection of personnel includes actively seeking persons whose philosophy, vision, experience is congruent with AI;
  - AI training is provided.
- Formal communication systems are in place that is transparent, trust-worthy, grounded in constructive thoughtful principles.
- Relationships are fostered that empower people to feel valued, encouraged, and capable. Everyone is expected to contribute to the development and sustenance of a school culture that is based on respect and articulated values. This would require specific attention directed to:
  - Teacher orientation;
  - Home/school communication;
  - Class meetings;
  - Advisory groups;
  - Leadership Training;
  - Profiles (student, teacher, parent, administrator, school board member) where expectations are clear;
  - SMART goals;
  - Community Service.
- School leadership is aware of and grounded in current reality and promotes positive change seeking most vibrant and futuristic tools to realize it. This would include that:
  - Technology is incorporated;
  - Balance is valued and time provided for reflection;
  - Connections to nature, local realities and the world are provided.
- School leadership that seeks provocative questions/inquiries that promotes awareness and liberation.

The initial key assumption by the CM Core Administration Team in designing the necessary ecological conditions for the use of Appreciative Leadership was that there would be shared leadership of the school. This is a non-traditional view of school leadership, but one that they expected to be highly functional if powered by AI throughout the school's social architecture.

#### *Finding 4 Summary*

In review of the design possibilities map and provocative propositions created by the CM Core Administration Team, it is apparent that not only was AI suggested as the central approach to leadership but they advocated a social architecture based on the principles of AI. In relation to the constructionist principle, the team recommended that relationships and communication be stressed and cultivated. While paying attention to the "worlds that words create," the team further recognized the need to support the vision with policies that stipulate the roles of constituents. Embracing the principle of simultaneity, the team sows the seeds of change in suggesting areas for community inquiry, learning and growth. The team invites the stakeholders in the learning community to coauthor their own learning paths (poetic principle). The group attended to the poetic principle by always holding up a desired vision of the school. The underlying vein of the positive principle runs through the work of the CM Core Administration Team in creating and celebrating generative experiences.



### CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter Four delivered four relevant findings from an analysis of the data collected during a AI learning team process with the CM Core Administration Team. The four findings were: (1) The process of conducting an Appreciative Inquiry into Appreciative School Leadership resulted in the participants feeling empowered and energized with a new sense of purpose and dedication. They reported feeling valued and desiring to carry forward the same; (2) The CM Core Administration Team used concepts congruent with Appreciative Leadership to create a generative holistic learning community interested in empowering members to make a positive difference in the world during their service together; (3) The CM Core Administration Team described leadership for the future that is congruent with Appreciative Leadership in the use of strategies that embody *Inquiry, Illumination, Inclusion, Inspiration, and Integrity*; and (4) The CM Core Administration Team suggested that the school adopt Appreciative Inquiry as the desired approach/framework for establishing the necessary ecological conditions for Appreciative Leadership. Chapter Five will discuss implications for future research, implications and recommendations for practice, relationships of the results to theory, limitations of this study, and a summary and conclusion.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter offers an overview and discussion. The overview takes account of the purpose of the study, the literature review, methodology, the research questions and the four findings along with a discussion of these findings in the order they were presented. I proffer implications for future research and praxis, offering recommendations along the way. Next, I consider the relationship of the findings to relevant theory and discuss the significance of the study. The chapter closes with a summary and conclusions.

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this inquiry was to explore how CM Core Administration Team members depict their high point experiences as school leaders, to discover practices that contribute to Appreciative Leadership and to portray Appreciative School Leadership at CM. It also describes how CM core administrators visualize their dreams and designs for employing Appreciative Leadership for the future of CM.

### SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

My professional experience working as the curriculum facilitator for CM and serving as part of the Core Administrative Team helped me to create the conceptual framework for my study. Based on these experiences, I found that school leadership has the potential to be generative—in enhancing the capacity of the educational community while infusing life into student learning and into the organization itself.

A social constructionist epistemology was integral to my experiences. The basic proposition of social construction(ism) is that *we construct the world* through relationships; that is, through everyday dialogue and interaction with other people as we try to understand and make meaning of the world (Gergen & Gergen, 2004).

This same epistemology serves as the underpinning of an Appreciative Inquiry theoretical perspective. AI as a theoretical perspective is designed to help (school) leaders recognize their strengths, achievements, and optimal experiences or *the positive core* that gives life to the organization (Cooperrider et al., 2003). As an action research framework and methodology, AI promotes a co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations and the world around them (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). AI is a systematic means for discovering the positive core that gives way to inquiry, imagination and innovation in change management for the future. AI finds its transformative potential in dialogue and affirmation of the positive.

The appreciation of organizational life with a focus upon a positive image followed by positive action results in the development of an affirmative organization where members learn to value the life-enhancing properties of themselves, their work and the organization (Cooperrider, 1990). AI may be used to develop an appreciative learning culture which “accentuates the past, evokes images of the possible futures, and creates a spirit of restless, ongoing inquiry that empowers members to new levels of activity” (Barrett, 1995, pp. 4-5). A new genus of life affirming organizations has emerged through Appreciative Organizing (*organizing as if life matters*) in response to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Whitney, 2007; Whitney et al., 2010). Appreciative

Organizing invites a new paradigm of leadership, one that engenders collaboration and expanded participation in all aspects of the organization.

Organizations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are finding it essential to have leaders who are *realistic visionaries*, who can recognize the talent, intelligence and creativity that diverse organization members bring to their work and who can build on this diversity to inspire greater commitment and achievement (Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1990). As a more subtle and complex understanding of organizations is required, the need for leaders who care about context, wholeness, and interconnectivity becomes evident (Schiller et al., 2001). Appreciative Leadership (AL), a theoretical extension of AI, cultivates the ability to perceive the positive and generative potential inherent in a given situation and to act purposefully to transform the potential to outcomes (Whitney et al., 2010).

Educational organizations, ranging from kindergarten to universities, however, have made successful use of Appreciative Inquiry (and variations of the appreciative stance) to build capacity within school communities. The primary focus of Appreciative Inquiry in education has been in the area of school improvement, strategic planning, and school revitalization work. Researchers use AI to study an array of specific educational issues through the processes of discovering, valuing and building capacity.

### METHODOLOGY

I employed a qualitative case study research design to facilitate a two-day AI Learning Team Process consisting of the first four stages of the 5-D Cycle – Definition, Discovery, Dream and Destiny. The AI Learning Team Process is a form of *AI Summit* which is designed for smaller, focused groups (Ludema et al., 2003). CM Core Administration Team members explored their high point AL experiences, described their dreams for using AL strategies and the ecological conditions necessary for the use of appreciate school leadership. The CM Core Administration Team consisted of five members who had worked together from 2002 to 2008 at CM.

Data was collected using semi-structured participant paired interviews, participant group discussions, and participant created documents. Member checking was performed by the group during each stage of the AI Learning Team Process. I served as a participant observer in the role of facilitator of the AI Learning Team Process throughout the four stages.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A central question guided my study: What is the role and value of Appreciative School Leadership? To date, Appreciative School Leadership has not been fully identified; yet, the concepts of Appreciative Leadership have. To systematically address this situation, I designed this study to answer the following research questions:

1. As members of the CM Core Administration Team from 2002 to 2008 describe their effective high point leadership experiences, are these congruent with established formal Appreciative Leadership concepts?
2. How do the members of the CM Core Administration Team describe their dreams for leading while using Appreciative Leadership strategies in the future?
3. How do members of the CM Core Administration Team describe the ecological conditions necessary for the use of Appreciative Leadership?

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Four salient findings emerged from the data analysis. These are:

**Finding 1:** The process of conducting an Appreciative Inquiry into school leadership resulted in the participants saying they felt empowered, energized with a new sense of purpose and dedication. They also reported feeling valued and desirous to carry forward the same in their future work, whether at CM or other places in the world.

**Finding 2:** CM Core Administration Team members had used congruent Appreciative Leadership concepts to create a generative holistic learning community interested in empowering members to make a positive difference in the world.

**Finding 3:** The CM Core Administration Team described leadership strategies for the future that are congruent with Appreciative Leadership in the use of strategies that embody Inquiry, Illumination, Inclusion, Inspiration, and Integrity (Whitney et al., 2010).

**Finding 4:** The CM Core Administration Team suggested that schools adopt Appreciative Inquiry as the desired approach/framework for establishing the necessary ecological conditions for Appreciative Leadership.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

**FINDING 1:** *The process of conducting an Appreciative Inquiry into Appreciative School Leadership resulted in the participants feeling empowered and energized with a new sense of purpose and dedication as well as feeling valued and desiring to carry forward the same in their future work.*

AI has been described as both a philosophy and a methodology for change leadership (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The participants entered into this study having served together as the CM Core Administration Team. They valued and exercised cycles of reflection and action in their leadership practices. Though they did not know it at the time, their practices corresponded with living an appreciative paradigm as described by Stavros and Torres (2005). The group created a common language and valued collective learning with an appreciative approach. Late in their tenure together (2007), for their regular shared readings they selected Appreciative Living: The Principles of Appreciative Inquiry in Personal Life (Kelm, 2005). The discussions of this group reading further supported their already in-place appreciative practices by providing an improved collective understanding. This experimental form of collaborative leadership resulted in strong group cohesion and forged the foundation for what Robinson and Rose (2007) called *an operative team for a new generation*. The team served as the main integrating structure to bring about shared meaning, innovation, and collaboration across multiple stakeholder interests (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney, & Fry; 2004). Their leadership was generative in building the capacity to create learning, performing and thriving school environments (Klimek et al., 2008). What started as an experimental way of operating became normal. The AI Learning Team process conducted in this study, therefore, seemed “natural” to them.

By agreeing to participate in an Appreciative Inquiry, the participants knowingly agreed to take part in an exercise to build human capacity: individually and their collective hope for future educational practices. More specifically, per the definition of the words *appreciate* and *inquire*, the participants agreed to value and recognize the best in people, affirm strengths and potentials, and to perceive those things that “give life” to human systems. The group explored and discovered these capacities within themselves, their practices and their school by asking the right questions and being open to see new potentials and possibilities (Cooperrider et al., 2005). By participating in an

Appreciative Inquiry into school leadership, and more specifically into AL, the participants were creating more of the world that they were seeking. According to Barrett and Fry (2005), active participation in an Appreciative Inquiry generates more hope and confidence in building human capacity and is a principal benefit from participating in an Appreciative Inquiry.

The Discovery stage of the AI Learning Team Process afforded an opportunity for participants to discover individual and group leadership strengths, as evident in the narration of high point experiences. These strengths were mutually affirmed during the iterative process of member checking with the formal concepts of Appreciative Leadership. The revelation of best practices embraced a spirit of vitality and potency that was further accelerated during the subsequent Dream and Destiny stages of the Appreciative Inquiry by the team. The art of appreciation was cultivated throughout the process as factors that gave life became apparent. (For a detailed breakdown of the High Point Events identified by the CM Core Administrative Team, see Appendix 42.)

As the group discovered the best of *what is*, they embraced the opportunity to envision a future of *what could be*. The AI process was an inclusive, collaborative, dialogical effort of attending to strengths, peak experiences and intriguing possibilities. CM Core Administration Team members spent many hours engaged in appreciative ways of knowing and working together, which Barrett (2004) terms as *Living on the Appreciative Edge* in self-organizing ways that embrace spontaneity, innovation and improvisation. This enabled them to create shared images of a preferred future based in their positive core. This experience empowered and emboldened them to continue with their educational leadership practices. Discovering that their existing leadership practices were aligned with the formal concepts of AL, they wanted to include AL formally into a design for optimal future school leadership.

This result is consistent with the research indicating that the school leaders were motivated to build upon their own stories and images of success (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003). Collegial sentiments of hope and pride expressed by the participants were consistent with the intended use of the AI Learning Team Process (Messerschmit, 2008).

**FINDING 2:** *CM Core Administration Team members used congruent Appreciative Leadership concepts to create a generative holistic learning community interested in empowering members to make a positive difference in the world.*

Below, the findings are discussed in terms of each of five typologies of Appreciative Leadership which integrates the five AL themes by Schiller et al. (2001) and the four AL formative ideas by Whitney et al. (2010). The use of AL practices by the CM team during their shared tenure was made evident during the narrative stories shared during the AI Team Learning process and was confirmed through member checking with the formal themes and ideas of AL during the discovery stage.

*Leaders are belief-based with explicit spiritual orientation and practices (Schiller et al.).  
A positive world view; (Whitney et al.).*

According to Schiller et al. (2001), Appreciative Leaders are belief-based, demonstrated by their values-based behaviors deemed genuine, credible and respectful. Appreciative Leaders often practice a personal spirituality. In AL, Schiller et al. (2001) and Whitney et al. (2010) subscribe to an optimistic, positive worldview holding every person in high regard and which includes a faith in the potential of humankind.

The highpoint stories shared during the discovery stage of the AI Team Learning process revealed the collective beliefs of the CM team. The central shared belief was the value of learning.

Combined with a positive worldview, the leadership strove to move the community towards a powerful culture of learning and this led to positive results (Taylor, 2010). This leadership style made for a dynamic school that fits Wheatley's (2006; 2007) description of a living system.

Participants took pride in recounting their CM learning initiatives and the way stakeholders of the community were included, regardless of position. They believed that new learning was empowering to everyone's lives as well as beneficial for student learning.

While not specifically faith-based, it was "spiritual" in the conviction that using their positive world view to holistically impact the lives of the students, teachers, staff and parents would ripple out into their extended circles and out into the world, making it a better place to live. This is congruent with the principle that the holistic perspective is part of the spiritual dimension of leadership (Houston, Blanstein, & Cole, 2008). Through their genuine intentions, the group set up an environment of positive energy around themselves and this was strengthened by their visions for the future. Stakeholder groups of students, teachers and parents joined the administrators in collaborative processes working towards a shared vision with positive energy. According to Houston and Sokolow (2006), enlisting the community to focus their attention on a higher cause is a reflection of a spiritual dimension of leadership. No longer satisfied to problem-solve their way back to the status quo, members of the community were united in envisioning a special school and bringing it into reality.

The CM Administrative Core Team based decisions and subsequent actions on whether a chosen course was life honoring and ethically correct. The descriptors used in their highpoint leadership stories include: empowerment, awareness, doing, empathy, responsibility and synchronicity; these represent what Deepak Chopra would call the "soul of leadership" (2002).

In these times when the focus in education has been leaving no child behind, when test scores are the primary measure of "success" to the disadvantage of creativity and the interests of the whole child (ASCD, 2012), it would seem that the soul of leadership is truant. Perkins, Wellman, and Wellman (2009) looked at the role of spirituality in school leadership practices and noted an apparent void in school leadership skills when it comes to creating a learning culture. They recognized that the sense of spirituality in leadership naturally enhanced leadership practices, especially in the embodiment of trust and authenticity originating from principled moral values and enhanced by an ethic of caring, justice, equity, fairness and community.

Our AI Core Administrative Team These amply represented traits during the Learning Team Process. Process stories of proactive positive leadership clearly embodied a spiritual connection to learning.

*Leadership lives in the group, not in any one person (Schiller et al.).*

*It's about relational capacity (Whitney et al.).*

Appreciative Leadership resides in the confluence of people with a positive world view that have an unwavering commitment to bringing out the best in themselves and others, and wish to turn potential into positive power (Schiller et al., 2001; Whitney et al., 2010). Whitney et al. (2010), recognize that relationships are at the heart of AL as people come together with their inherent strengths, resources, and capacities to co-create and to make things happen. During the AI Learning Team process, the CM Administrative Core Team recounted their (literal and metaphorical) coming together at a round table where "whatever was best for students" was placed at the center for the sharing of perspectives by the various members of the team. Similar to what Schiller et al. (2001) noted, leadership for the CM Administrative Core Team lived in the group, not in any one person. Together, the team participated in a communal discovery of what was best for the students and for the school in moving forward, which most times required involvement of other stakeholders within the school community. This became the group's *modus operandi* in working with student, teacher and parent groups to embrace the same. The team integrated an appreciative approach with social

constructionism and knowledge management into what Thatchenkery (2005) terms *Appreciative Sharing of Knowledge* (ASK). Stakeholders worked together towards a shared vision they believed will make a difference in the world.

According to prominent educational authors Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), a key first step to providing effective school leadership is to develop a strong school leadership team. The CM administrative core team did just that. From the interviews and group discussions, the recounting was inspirational. Group members provided personally meaningful stories (selective memory) to illustrate their points. Amazingly, other group members would join in with further stories as examples to support the initial point. Repeatedly throughout the AI Team Learning Process members linked the details of a collective memory that exhibited a tight unity amongst themselves.

The CM Administrative Core Team expressed the idea of creating a *culture of learning*. This is consistent with the ideas and competences for creating an appreciative learning culture as described by Barrett (1995). The team participants recounted stories that were representative of the affirmative, expansive, generative, and collaborative competences within the school community. As these competences were employed, they permeated the school community and a school-wide organizational culture developed around learning with a limitless imagining of possibilities. This is in sharp contrast to the restricted possibilities that attend a deficit-based problem-solving focus, of which the field of education is often accused (Bray & Kehle, 2011).

The leadership of the CM Core Administration Team fit the pattern of the leadership of an appreciative organization that is suited to the emerging conditions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as described by Anderson et al. (2008). It promoted collaborative participation, sought out stakeholders, valued diversity and difference, aligned strengths, valued commonalities within the community and celebrated participation within the organization. Together, the evidence of strengths-based management, AI, and positive organizational scholarship parallels the foundations for the 21<sup>st</sup> century field of organizational development promoted by Cooperrider and Godwin (2010) as *Innovation-inspired Positive Organization Development* (IPOD). The Center for Public Education (NSBA, 2012) as well as the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (2012) chronicle and highlight the demand for an education that provides tools and resources that will permit students to compete in a global economy that demands innovation. The emergence of a school as an appreciative organization seems most suitable for addressing the challenging conditions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as schools engage and educate young people to grow in a vastly changing environment.

*Multiple truths exist in ways of thinking, doing, and being (Schiller et al.).*

A traditional organizational structure for the school is hierarchical with one person occupying the apex leadership position (e.g.: school director) and dictating the direction and operation of the school. Schiller et al. (2001) stated that with Appreciative Leadership, multiple truths exist in the ways of thinking, doing and being. The CM school director created an Administrative Core Team that valued this more respectful way of working and modeled it.

Members of this team empowered one another to seek out multiple viewpoints and best practices to fit the needs of the school in their own quest for self-improvement. Self-reflection became a core practice for their leadership team and this was championed throughout the school community. This represents a break from school leadership found in the traditional individualistic paradigm (Gergen, 2009) and leans more toward theories of distributed leadership (Harris, 2009; Leithwood, Mascal, & Strauss, 2009).

*Appreciative Leaders have an unwavering commitment to bringing out the best in themselves and others (Schiller et al.).  
It turns potential into positive power (Whitney et al.).*

Schiller et al. (2001) noted that in their practices, Appreciative Leaders consistently used appreciation, encouragement, coaching and support of people's best talents and strengths. Whitney et al. (2010) remarked that for Appreciative Leaders, it is a way of being in their relationships and practices that promotes positive power from seeing potential and then believing in and supporting the positive core of people. The CM Administrative Core Team promoted an ethos of recognizing strengths, embracing challenges, valuing learning, practicing self-reflection and working hard to bring out their individual and collective best. In their relationships with community members this attitude was evident in their empowerment of students, faculty and staff to do the same.

The CM Administrative Core Team examined their own strengths as individuals and as a team, exhibiting an attitude that more is accomplished by maximizing strengths rather than by scrutinizing deficits. This is congruent with the focus of the strengths-based movement of positive psychology by Buckingham and Clifton (2001). This is also aligned with Rath and Conchie's (2008) examination of strengths-based leadership in which they determined that: (a) the most effective leaders are always investing in strengths; and (b) the most effective leaders surround themselves with the right people and then maximize their team. The stories shared during the AI Learning Team Process provided evidence that the CM Administrative Core Team extended this attitude and perspective throughout the organization by promoting pursuit of a higher purpose that was truly meaningful and worthy of our energy, passion and strengths. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) term this *The Meaningful Life*, an optimal level of practicing positive psychology that enables individuals and communities to thrive. Living from these attitudes and practices is commensurate with an empowered strengths-based organization according to Stratton-Berkessel (2010).

*Appreciative Leaders find generative forces in their many circumstances  
and multiple systems (Schiller et al.).  
Sets positive ripples in motion (Whitney et al.).*

Schiller et al. (2001) underscored David Cooperrider's belief that *inquiry* is the most important word in the field of AI. Appreciative Leaders foster a climate of inquiry. By using generative language and subsequent actions in engaged relationships, waves of positive change are initiated by Appreciative Leaders that ripple outward (Whitney, 2010). For the CM Administrative Core Team, the *center of the table* served as symbol and a platform for the members to come together, inquire, and create understandings and action plans that would benefit the school and student learning. Members arrived at the table with an open mind and a desire to make a positive difference for the school stakeholders. The members trusted each other as well as the process and engaged in true collaborative dialogical practices of questioning, listening, and valuing. These authentic conversations allowed the team to think outside of the box in addressing school life while remaining attentive to the various considerations of the school stakeholders. Individually and collaboratively, members of the CM Administrative Core Team were reflexive life-long learners dedicated to cultivating the same in the school community. The hub of this movement began with the director of the school, who modeled and guided dialogue, dropping the pebble into still waters, and started the ripple moving outward to the Administrative Core Team that, in turn, carried it into the CM school community.

The principles of AI (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005) were put into action in: (1) the Constructionist principle as the team sought a communal basis for understanding the organization; (2) the Simultaneity principle as members chose to use the power



of questions to sow the seeds of change; (3) the Poetic principle as the team and the members of the school shared the roles of co-authoring the topics of their ongoing school improvement inquiry; (4) the Anticipatory principle as the team created an inspiring vision for the school; and (5) the Positive principle the school motto—*Catch the Spirit!*—in providing the positive affect necessary to ignite the flame of positive change.

During 2002 to 2008, the CM Core Administration Team created an appreciative learning culture (Barrett, 1995) in using Appreciative Leadership concepts, albeit unknowingly, to create a generative all-inclusive learning community. Their practices were distinctive of (a) a “spiritual” belief in and affinity to learning; (b) a belief in the value of team and teamwork and a desire to spread this value throughout the organization; (c) a constructionist orientation to making generative use of collaboration and dialogue; (d) the empowerment of a strengths-based organization; and (e) a searching for and cleaving to the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them.

**FINDING 3:** *The CM Core Administration Team described leadership strategies for the future that are congruent with Appreciative Leadership in the use of strategies that embody Inquiry, Illumination, Inclusion, Inspiration, and Integrity.*

During the Dream phase of the AI Learning Team Process, the CM Core Administration Team envisioned future school leadership in ways congruent with the Five Core Strategies of AL: Inquiry, Illumination, Inclusion, Inspiration and Integrity (Whitney et al., 2010). This is logical. According to Cooperrider’s heliotropic hypothesis, social systems evolve toward the positive images they have for themselves (Cooperrider, 1990; Bushe, 2005). From their positive core, they amplified the possibilities for a better organization and a better world with a *dream dialogue* (Cooperrider et al., 2005) during the Dream phase. This created synergy and excitement among the members as they envisioned a school of the future that embodied the use of AL. During the Discovery phase, the team also discovered that they had used AL principles during their work together at CM without realizing that is what they were doing. During a *dreaming journey of mutual discovery* (Cooperrider et al., 2005), the CM team recognized leadership themes congruent with AL that they believed to be the life-giving forces related to the success of the school.

In forming their cumulative dream statement for school leadership<sup>2</sup>, they talked about practices related to the specific core strategies of AL as delineated by Whitney et al. (2010). In discussions related to *Inquiry*, the team supported the AL key practice of valuing inquiry and using it to bridge team inquiry and performance in creating a school culture of inquiry. In terms of AL *Illumination*, team members held high regard for positive self-talk, strengths spotting, attention to trust, reduction of stress, appreciative coaching, appreciative check-ins and the dedication to creating a positive emotional environment. Celebrations of the positive were prescribed “rituals” as meetings were begun with the recounting of stories related to successful student learning. The team acknowledged the importance of the key practice of *Inclusion* of the various stakeholders in the school community at a variety of levels to create a sense of unity in moving the school forward. In terms of *Inspiration*, the group gave high importance to creating a life-affirming vision and purpose for a healthy school “where the best in everyone is alive”. The group felt that the foundation for their dream of optimal school leadership is *Integrity* in embracing, living, and implementing AL in conjunction with development of personal leadership throughout the school community.

The CM Core Administration Team recognized that their vision for future school leadership was ambitious and filled with potential. They believed that by being and living the concepts of AL in

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<sup>2</sup> “Appreciative Leadership guided by vision promotes a culture of passion, reflection and celebration of learning shared by all.”

their relationships with everyone from the identified school leaders through various stakeholders, the school would flourish. The team members recalled the positive differences they had made in the lives of their students, colleagues and members of the school community by applying appreciative principles and wished for more of the same. They set their hopes on liberating individual potential – a spirit of empowerment for all in their pursuit of learning. This aim is congruent with the way AL makes a difference, according to Whitney et al. (2010). This aim is also similar to the work highlighted in the Ringshaug Primary School in Norway (Nesje, 2007) and Rhodes-Yenowine (2003) who believes that schools should see themselves as learning organizations that borrow upon the spirit of education and shared dialogue to create excited worlds of learning.

**FINDING 4:** *The CM Core Administration Team suggested that the school adopt Appreciative Inquiry as the desired approach/framework for establishing the necessary ecological conditions for Appreciative Leadership.*

Using the 4-D cycle during the AI Team Learning Process allowed the CM Core Administration Team to build successively upon their discoveries and dreams while addressing the desired future for school leadership. The iterative process allowed the group to understand reflexively their positive leadership core as they identified strategies congruent with the formal concepts of Appreciative Leadership. Faithfully adhering to the intended purpose of AI that liberates the power of inquiry, builds relationships and unleashes learning (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), the team recognized the potency of AI in both the inquiry process and in their own practices. In recognizing that AL is an out-growth of AI practices, the CM Core Administration Team proposed the adoption of AI as the desired approach for leadership of the school. While arriving at the conclusion logically based on their experiences, the team recognized that their proposition may seem provocative in breaking away from traditional school leadership.

During the AI Team Learning Process, the CM Core Administration Team recognized the benefits of AL directly corresponding to the Eight Benefits of Appreciative Leadership (Whitney & Ludema, 2006). The benefits are:

1. People feel equal, essential and exceptional.
2. Conversations matter: they deepen relationships and enable cooperation about what matters to people and the business.
3. Accountability is natural. People commit to what they help create.
4. Diversity is honored and leveraged toward social, technical and product innovations that serve the whole.
5. Living with questions and being comfortable with multiple and differing perspectives creates humility, learning and wisdom.
6. Focus on goodness and health leads to organizations and communities working for a good and healthy world for all people.
7. Emotionally intelligent organizations and communities are created.
8. Positive results can be measured in the triple bottom line of people, profit and the planet.

In exploring the possibilities for future school leadership, the CM Core Administration Team believed that these benefits were worthy aspirations for the school and that AI should be given high standing as a *mental model*<sup>3</sup> to permit these benefits to be realized. They believed that adopting Appreciative Inquiry as a guiding model for school affairs would lead “naturally” to the use of Appreciative Leadership (Schiller et al., 2001; Whitney et al., 2010). From this, it is possible that the attention to and use of AI derivative practices such as Appreciative Intelligence (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006), Appreciative Learning Cultures (Barrett, 1995) and Appreciative Organizing

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<sup>3</sup> “Mental model” as used here means a model of the way the world operates.

(Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1990; Anderson et al., 2008) might further develop the social architecture of the school in an appreciative direction. According to the team, the rationale for AI as the guiding framework for school leadership is the value of generative leadership that entreats the school community to create shared meaning and encourages them to attend to pertinent and timely issues of the “outside” world.

According to the CM Core Administration Team, adopting AI as a mental model, especially in the form of Appreciative Leadership, permits the school community to address specific and necessary elements of formal school organization in an *appreciative* way. CM team members supported using AL to create community understanding of the work at hand. They also proposed activities to develop respect and trust between school and community which they sensed would clarify the roles of constituents in supporting the vision of the school and bringing it to life. The same type of AI organizational mindset would allow stakeholders to participate in decisions about how to reflect on, measure and showcase learning while specifying the expectations and competencies of all involved in student learning. The CM Core Administration Team found that personal connection matters and people need to feel valued within the leadership culture. Appreciative School Leadership they believed may serve successfully to empower students and teachers to learn and grow. A relationship of trust and shared vision between the director and the school board is crucial to establishing the leadership culture, the CM Core Administration Team recognized, making this level of school leadership the pivotal place to introduce AI and AL.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of study suggest multiple possibilities for future research. The study could be repeated with the addition of the fifth stage (Destiny) of the AI 5-D Cycle. This might be done in a school to address the context of that specific school in designing and implementing more formal AL strategies that would then be able to be evaluated in terms of having increased capacity.

While my study involved only the Core Administration Team, further research using the AI 5-D Cycle might add students, teachers and parents in the Team Learning Process. A variant on this might concentrate on AL within a specific focus group, such as teachers. The AI Summit format is scalable and can address AL with a large number of school stakeholders simultaneously. As such, it might bridge the interests and views among stakeholders and offer a better understanding of AL within the school community.

The action research approach has utility in Appreciative Inquiry applications beyond AL in schools. Within education, other possibilities include Appreciative Organizing, Appreciative Intelligence, Appreciative Pedagogy and Appreciative Governance. Further research into Appreciative Organizing may offer cross-fertilization between business and schools that share certain challenges of the modern day. If so, the two fields may have ideas and practices of mutual benefit.

In light of current research related to brain-based learning and multiple intelligences, the potential for exploring an Appreciative Intelligence within education is exciting. Initial forays already have been made into appreciative pedagogical practices. Many opportunities remain for this type of action-research, especially within elementary and secondary schools. Appreciative Governance (Mohr, Millar, & Saint, 2011; Samuels & Torres, 2011), a relatively new addition to AI informed practices, seems to be a logical set of principles that might be examined in conjunction with AL in an educational context. These sub-disciplines of AI all appear to fall under the dominion and practice of AL in schools; these add value for a more complete AI framework for schools.

My immediate preference for future research would be to explore using the AI process with educator groups within other American-international school communities. My experience is that many of these schools face similar challenges and are eager to evolve beyond them; but, they have

yet to adopt a generative mode of learning and growing based upon inquiry. I believe that these schools would benefit from appreciative action research into their own contextual school leadership. More of such research may lead to other AI practices in instruction, governance, and strategic planning.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRAXIS

Because of my grounding in applications and practice, I propose two recommendations for praxis:

1. I recommend that stakeholders in schools who are interested in co-constructing an effective learning community conduct an Appreciative Inquiry into Appreciative Leadership.
2. I recommend that schools, who are interested in Appreciative Organizing, explore the possibilities of Appreciative Governance.

### RECOMMENDATION 1

I recommend that stakeholders in schools who are interested in co-constructing an effective learning community conduct an Appreciative Inquiry into Appreciative Leadership. The act and process of performing an Appreciative Inquiry allows participants to share in the learning, discovery and appreciation of everything that gives life to the system when it is most vibrant and effective. Subsequently, participants feel energized and empowered to excellence, high performance and positive change (Ludema et al., 2003). It also sets the stage and the impetus for an appreciative learning culture with AL at the forefront.

In my study, the participants in the AI Team Learning Process reported a feeling of empowerment in addressing future positive school change in recognition of the important role that leadership plays. In accord with the Five Practices of Appreciative Leadership (Whitney & Ludema, 2006) the participants noted that: (1) inquiry may be used to learn and innovate; (2) AL brings out the best of others; (3) AL engages others in co-creation; (4) AL inspires hopes for a better world; and, most importantly to this group, (5) AL is about embracing relational integrity. When a school community participates in an Appreciative Inquiry into AL, stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, and administrators) engage in a dialogical process and co-construct an effective learning community at many levels of relational networks.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

I recommend that schools interested in Appreciative Organizing explore the possibilities of Appreciative Governance (AG). The first crossroads in examining Appreciative School Leadership is to consider the “who” of school leadership and the desired leadership structure. I strongly suggest looking into shared leadership, a format wherein leadership is promoted throughout the school organization at all levels of stakeholder participation. Participants concluded that, when leadership is a shared, AL is the desired approach for (a) formal communication systems that are transparent, trust-worthy and grounded in constructive, thoughtful principles; (b) fostering relationships that empower people to feel valued, encouraged, and capable; (c) being aware of and grounded in current reality with the intention of promoting positive change; and (d) utilizing provocative questions/inquiries that promote awareness and liberation. The group highlighted the need for the connection of these shared leadership understandings with the network of students, parents and teachers, but especially between the school director and the board of directors. These AL relational characteristics are congruent with the definition of AG from Mohr et al. (2011):

AG is the set of all activities that guide the function of a human system and its many interdependent parts within its environment. These activities occur within a governance architecture (i.e. structures and processes) that both directs and enables members to set direction of purpose to make decisions assuring the fulfillment of their purpose, and to set the standards of relationship, behavior and accountability (p. 7).

The tenets of AG (Mohr et al., 2011) are that it (a) promotes a behavioral architecture that is ethical and positive to the long terms interests of the stakeholders; (b) makes use of the organization's strengths, resources and assets; (c) acknowledges that governance is carried out by all of the people in the organization; (d) focuses on the range of behavior of all the stakeholders; (e) includes the four AGIL functions of governance while operating from a social constructionist frame; and (f) begins from a strengths-based perspective and is inquiry driven (p. 7).

I further recommend consideration of the six Appreciative Governance Design Principles as presented by Samuels and Torres (2011), with special attention to the principles of learning, uncertainty, and emergence. The learning principle involves generating, collecting, and transferring new information and knowledge that creates value for the organization. Collaborative inquiry is practiced, transparent feedback systems are developed and the members engage in alternating cycles of action and reflection. The future is ambiguous and uncertain, according to the uncertainty principle, and decisions often involve improvising from diverse input and collective sense making. The emergence principle reminds us to stay open to possibility, encourage curiosity, and allow new sparks to take off. According to the authors, these AG principles provide the ecology for a living system that will support engagement with a multiplicity of beliefs, assumptions, and values of organizational practices. In exploring AG, a school community raises awareness and informs choice about the structures and processes of governance by capitalizing on the individual and collective stakeholder strengths and maximizing the capacity of the whole school.

### RELATIONSHIP OF FINDINGS TO RELEVANT THEORY

The conceptual framework for this study originated from my social constructionist epistemology, professional experience, and the theoretical perspectives of Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership. The social constructionist epistemology was reflected in my use of an iterative and performative AI Team Learning Process to explore Appreciative School Leadership practices and to prescribe the ecological conditions necessary for using them.

AI served not only as a methodology but also as a framework for allowing CM Core Administration Team members to discover their positive core as leaders in their school community and to examine possibilities for building upon that to develop their own and the institution's capacity. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) recognized that AI may be used as an action research framework and methodology to promote a co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organization and the world around them. This approach permitted us to produce the data in this research.

This study benefited from the Reed's (2007) assertion that AI can contribute to naturalistic research. She also noted that AI make is a good reflective approach in both formative and intervention research. Several of her ideas about change work correspond well with the research process and findings of this study. As part of an AI informed research, Core Administration Team members took an engaged stance in a communal and collective interaction to explore Appreciative Leadership. By recognizing successful experiences in their stories and narratives about the past, they began understanding how to go about building on these successes in the future. As a result, the participants reported feeling empowered and energized to continue making a difference in schools and education. Core Administration Team members learned to value and affirm themselves and

their work, consistent with the theory of affirmation proposed by Srivastva and Cooperrider (1990).

In this research study, the narratives and participant created documents offered evidence of Appreciative Leadership (AL) practices. Whitney et al. (2010) noted that by employing the strategies and practices of AL, over time you will *become* an Appreciative Leader and make a positive difference. The CM team showed positive results with Appreciative School Leadership by embracing the formative ideas of AL and by employing AL core strategies (Whitney et al., 2010). In being and facilitating the positive change (Whitney et al., 2010), the CM team demonstrated their dedication to: (1) cultivating character; (2) liberating others' potential; (3) fostering collaborations; and (4) designing innovative structures. Data gathered from the AI Learning Team Process offered further evidence of the themes and characteristics of AL identified in Schiller et al. (2001) and showed effectiveness in using AL to bring an appreciative approach to school leadership. Further, this evidence agreed with Positive and Appreciative Leadership Principles identified by Lewis and Moore (2011), especially that leadership is an emergent, iterative learning process.

During 2002 to 2008, the use of AL strategies enhanced the positivity and functionality of the school culture. While the Core Administrative Team did not have label, language or theory my research demonstrates that they were practicing Appreciative Leadership. In their work together, the CM Core Administrative Team chose to focus energy on building capacity throughout the school community, rather than being rooted in a problem-solving paradigm. Stories shared in the discovery phase and aspirations and plans developed during the dream and design phases of the 4-D Team Learning Process, unveiled the benefits and value of AL. Conversations and relationships were esteemed. Diversity was honored. Inquiry was prized. Students, faculty, staff, and parents focused on building a healthier learning world. They were committed to what they helped create. These are all consistent with the benefits of Appreciative Leadership (Whitney & Ludema, 2006). On a whole, stakeholder strengths and potentials were tapped in collaborative efforts to passionately learn and grow. These demonstrated efforts correspond well with the competencies necessary to support an appreciative learning culture (Barrett, 1995).

The CM Core Administration Team worked together from their positive core to lead the school. An Appreciative Learning culture was developed and nurtured to sustain positive change. The Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) of Effective Schools (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005) was evident in the intersection of trust, efficacy, positive psychology, and positive organizational behavior influenced by AL. The liberation and empowerment of the stakeholders' voices provided the energy for this aliveness to happen. Appreciative Leadership practices made this synergy possible. According to Ludema et al. (2003), these are characteristics of an Appreciative Organization. These also are characteristic principles of Appreciative Organizing (Whitney, 2008). By virtue of the practice of AL and Appreciative Organizing efforts by the CM Core Administration Team, the school was on their way to becoming an appreciative organization. Some claim Appreciative Organizing is optimally suited for the emerging conditions of organizational life in the current decade and beyond (Anderson, et al., 2008) and this appears to be consistent with the reports in this research study.

During the AI Team Learning Process, the CM Core Administration Team looked toward future school performance and suggested that AI be the desired approach/framework for organization and operation. They prescribed AL relational practice strategies (Whitney et al., 2010) to promote positive school performance. The CM team recognized the importance of a structure that attended to layers of hierarchy in school leadership while also maintaining the ability to create and share meaning throughout the community. As such, their preference for an appreciative organization is crucial to the full engagement of all stakeholders and to the efficacy of school (Dole, McNamee, Seiling, & Radford, 2004). Mantel and Ludema noted the necessity for sustaining positive change in promoting intended convergence of organizational-wide conversations through AL and Appreciative Organizational Design (2004). The group's belief in the centrality of AI can be summed

up in Rhodes-Yenowine's (2003) proposition that AI can promote positive image which leads to positive action in schools that experience themselves as learning organizations and prospective agents of hope in the world.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

My research extended to school administrators the use of the AI methodology in the form of the team learning process consisting of the first four stages of the AI 5-D Cycle. The method allowed study participants to define and understand the formal concept of Appreciative Leadership. They were able to explore, discover and describe their high point school leadership experiences were congruent with AL. Together, from the dreams that they described for using AL practices, they developed a suggested design for the future use of Appreciative School Leadership.

This study tenders a positive model for empowering school administration to enhance their leadership practices. It also contributes to theoretical knowledge by implementing an AI Learning Team Process as a means for empowering school administrators by describing their high point leadership experiences to extract the best and most important practices for leading their school community.

This study is significant because it validates the generative use and utility of AL in schools. Study participants, instrumental in turning CM into a highly effective school, were able to identify Appreciative Leadership strategies in their methods and the benefits they wrought in the school community. This study provides evidence for the benefits of integrating AL into school leadership development.

Of equal significance, this study center stages the idea of a school being an appreciative organization. As experienced school administrators, the participants recognized the omnipresent challenges in educating children for the future. They also recognized that dynamic use of AL as a forceful way to meet many of these challenges. The participants noted that in embracing shared leadership, a relational capacity is required to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power. The positive outward ripples that come of transforming latency and potential into outcomes must stem from leadership of the educational community amidst *supportive ecological conditions* aligned to a shared vision.

This study sheds light upon the idea that, as school leadership makes use of provocative questions and Appreciative Inquiry, it also promotes movement from a current reality towards a more vibrant future. This same spirit is one that may be cultivated among all school stakeholders and nurtured into a congruent academic and organizational learning culture.

In summary, this study is significant in its novel and eclectic use of an AI methodology to bridge the research-practice gap in school leadership. First, my study extends the research in the using an AI methodology with a social constructionist worldview to look at school leadership. Second, the formal concepts of Appreciative Leadership were brought into a school context. Third, as an action-research, this study served the participants by developing a more contextual understanding for addressing future practices. Finally, this study is significant in suggesting the need for convergence between Appreciative Leadership and Appreciative Organizational Design to sustain positive change in schools.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Four significant findings emerged from my analysis of the data from this study. These are: (1) The process of conducting an Appreciative Inquiry into Appreciative School Leadership resulted in the participants feeling empowered and energized with a new sense of purpose and dedication; they felt valued and desirous to carry these qualities forward in their future work. (2) CM Core

Administration Team members used congruent Appreciative Leadership concepts to create a generative holistic learning community interested in empowering members to make a positive difference in the world. (3) The CM Core Administration Team described leadership for the future in ways that are congruent with Appreciative Leadership, using practices that embody Inquiry, Illumination, Inclusion, Inspiration, and Integrity. (4) The CM Core Administration Team suggested that CM adopt Appreciative Inquiry as *the* desired approach/framework for establishing the necessary ecological conditions for Appreciative Leadership.

Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires that students be educated in a manner that prepares them to be successful in a complex, interconnected world. Present day challenges facing the field of education dictate that school leadership evolve from traditional century-old practices to those adequate for leading schools that prepare students with the knowledge, attitudes, and skill sets to make a difference in the world. My study focused on school leadership that appeared to me *to have worked* while being supportive, nurturing and alive.

The impetus for this research came with my discovery of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). It resonated with my personal and professional outlook by promising to build upon the positive and to transform potential into powerful realities. My inquiry into AI and leadership led to my *discovery* of Appreciative Leadership that I witnessed in the work of the leadership team at CM, in building relational capacity to generate energy and increased school performance, in the core alignment with making a positive difference in the world. Using AI as the theoretical perspective and methodology in conducting this study opened the possibility for generative exploration and identification of Appreciative Leadership (AL) in a specific school.

This study found Appreciative Leadership was instrumental in building a high functioning, healthy school and in creating a period of extraordinary events. It holds promise for the design of future school operations as long as the school community is interested in sharing leadership and is open to entering into the dialogue in co-creating an education for students that is alive and liberating.

As a concluding step in the appreciative vein of this research, I suggest the following *provocative proposition*: Leaders of schools can conduct an Appreciative Inquiry into Appreciative Leadership thereby creating a positive learning community. An inquiry into Appreciative Leadership builds organizational capacity that supports the potential of student learning. The term *leaders* refers to school boards—who may benefit from the practices of Appreciative Governance—and includes traditional school administrative positions as well as teacher and student leadership, parents, community leaders, funders, indeed all stakeholders. Appreciative Leadership provides a proper framework for a school community dedicated to building together a thriving school while meeting community expectations for communication, transparency, inclusion, and connectedness to the present world.



I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost

## EPILOGUE

This dissertation opened with a prologue. I wanted to invite the reader into a story about a once upon a time which became the research, the sense making and the volume in your hands. The prologue offered my reasons for entering into this study, starting with the setting and background details, moving on to my learning experiences to-date that influenced how I framed the study and my positioning in carrying it out. My particular focus for the study was to make meaning of the leadership situation during the years 2002 to 2008 at Colegio Maya: The American International School of Guatemala.

This period appeared to me generative and had a remarkable influence on the performance of the school. This was in light of leadership challenges the school had suffered prior to and after the identified period.

In building my story/research study, I used an Appreciative Inquiry performative research methodology in an iterative collaborative fashion to explore and more fully understand the theoretical concepts of Appreciative Leadership and Appreciative Organizing. Precisely, participants shared stories and performed reflexivity exercises. I passionately engaged the participants in Appreciative Learning through these activities, as they offered ways of exploring and establishing what works (Reed, Tracy & Holmberg, 2012).

Although stories do not have beginnings and endings, they must, for practical reasons, end. In bringing this story to its climax, I will use an epilogue to reflect upon my positioning and expanded learning during this research study.

## POSITIONING

As I began to organize this study, I struggled in designing it. How might it address what seemed to me empirical evidence of School Appreciative Leadership and address it in a way that allowed for personal and collaborative meaning making without it seeming too wooly? How might it make sense of what I saw yet withstand the high bar of rigor in research?

Specifically, I had an internal conversation about what constitutes research. This dialogue centered on: (a) the phenomena I wanted to examine and how it related to the social construction of reality and my positioning as a researcher; (b) the use of collaborative research may blur the boundaries between the researcher and the participants during their performance; and (c) selecting a methodology for conducting the research and a format for reporting it that strikes a balance of tensions between modernist research expectations and my intentions to examine school leadership in the postmodern condition by asking: Who to be? How to be? and What are we creating together? (Bava, 2012).

## Epilogue

I made initial decisions that guided the development and evolution of this research study, but it was my dogged pursuit of appreciative learning that carried me to arrive at this juncture. It is the place of connecting theoretical underpinnings to the actions taken in this research.

During the writing of this final chapter, I participated in the online course, *Relational and Performative Practices for Transformational Change: Collaboration and Dialogue* (Bava, 2012) which has allowed me to gain insight into the process of completing this research study. Participating in the assigned readings and the interactive learning community activities while conducting this study, I experienced several “Aha! Moments” and was better able to understand the social construction principles that had silently influenced and guided my design of this research study. The vocabulary and language surrounding social and relational constructionism have not come easy to me.

Sheila McNamee’s thoughts on “social construction as practical theory” (McNamee, 2004) resonate agreeably, almost harmoniously with my research. McNamee, a professor of communications, wrote, “Social construction is akin to a relational practice, a way of making sense of and engaging the world that invites others into the dialogue” (p. 1). From the start of this study and through the design and execution of this study, this was my intent.

As I struggled with the realization that there is not one prescribed social constructionist method or view, I was interested in articulating a constructionist sensibility in my study without too restrictive a set of procedures and techniques. I believe that the AI Team Learning Process created a conversational space that balanced the need for an arena where multiple logics, coherences and realities could be coordinated (p.4) while preserving the legitimacy of this research. The AI Team Learning Process provided a platform for us (the participants and me) to generate new resources for action as well new ways of making sense that support us in moving forward with new actions (p. 5). Together, we were able to create a world and delve into it with our words and other language tools (gestures, facial expressions, pictures, drawings, et cetera). We were able to explore Appreciative Leadership in ways that served as “openings to new understandings, confirmations of current understandings, to questions, and provocations to a wider range of possibilities” (p. 5 & 6).

My research was “a site of coordinated meaning making” (p. 8) where we were able to create a distinctive discourse around Appreciative School Leadership, one that invited certain ways of thinking and acting. It was a discursive option—an invitation to share in thinking, examining and creating a snapshot in time of Appreciative School Leadership without intending to present the ultimate truth. It was an examination of “situated practices of the participants at hand” in “identifying the real, true and good” of school leadership (p. 10). I agree with McNamee that there is a certain utility in the metaphor of meaning as performance; “it makes a ritualized practice familiar” (p. 11). “We create—perform together—a world, a lived reality” (p. 11). With the participants during this study and our prior shared work, I was able to re-live the pride we took in reflexive inquiry into our own resources for action, resources that initially were not being tapped, resources that created newer ways of “going on together” (p. 11).

A brief word about practices and performance—for this study, they were intertwined in our striving to understand Appreciative School Leadership. The active and reflexive research process was an exercise in performance for all of us involved in the study, which may be associated with AI and AL practices as well. The convening purposes of this practice-based, performative study were improvement of practices, and what our insider understandings of action in context might contribute to them (Haseman, 2006).

The framing of this study as a performative inquiry reflects intentionality (Bava, 2005) on my part to explore the value of Appreciative School Leadership. As I acknowledged earlier, I had been ambivalent about embarking upon this type of research study. From my earlier studies, I was aware of the tensions that come with research parameters and expectations that leave the modernist path. I was aware of the traditional academic, disciplinary and organizational discourses

## Epilogue

(Bava, 2005) that are inhospitable to my intended study. I also was conscious of organizational politics that, frankly, frowned upon the focus, the context and the methods of this study.

I have worked to accept these, while remaining cognizant of their presence. With this research study, I have chosen to embrace what Gergen (2008) terms the reconstructive phase of the qualitative movement by making use of social construction “as an invitation to create new ideas and practices in the sense of bringing about new and more promising world conditions” (p. 12). I have appreciated the efforts of Ken and Mary Gergen in addressing the tensions and transformations of qualitative inquiry (2003) and have incorporated methodological innovations such as reflexivity, multiple voicing, literary representation, and performance in my study. I have striven to authentically tell the truth and to represent my and the participants’ voices respectfully and accurately, while remembering that truth requires local context.

In choosing a traditional format for the writing of this dissertation, albeit with a prologue and epilogue, I have chosen a literary representation within my comfort zone. In terms of performance, I am confident that the participants of this study will take our discourse forward, as will I, to new educational avenues of practice and we will continue to expand the range of communities involved in the dialogue of Appreciative School Leadership.

I have learned to understand, accept and address the tenuous path I chose by embarking on this research study. Like Frost’s road less traveled, it has made all the difference.

## MY APPRECIATIVE LEARNING

In a recent issue of the *AI Practitioner* (February, 2012), guest editors Reed, Tracy, and Holmberg introduce the theme of the issue, *Learning is the spark of transformation* (p. 4), by noting that “individual and organizational transformation starts with learning” (p. 5). This resonates with (1) the work we did together as the CM Core Administrative Team during the years 2002-2008; (2) the AI Learning Team Process that was conducted during this study; and (3) my own learning in conducting this research study. As I have reported earlier, there is evidence of this transformative leadership in the work done by the CM Core Administration Team and during the AI Learning Team Process.

I now wish to reflect on my own appreciative learning and transformation in which this research study played a major part. I originally entered into this study with a sincere interest in wondering aloud what the possibilities were to improve upon the future delivery of education. As I framed and conducted my research study, I found junctures for pause, to investigate and to reflect upon relevant concepts from associated readings. The following are snapshots of ideas that caught my interest and that I believe hold promise for the future delivery of education.

## THE FUTURE

The idea of moving school performance from *good to great* has intrigued me since reading Collins’ book of the same title (2001). *Schools that Learn: A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook for Educators, Parents and Everyone Who Cares about Education* (Senge et al., 2000) also offers practical advice to strengthen schools to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. I believe the Five Disciplines may be worthy as they relate to education:

1. Personal Mastery: A set of practices that support children and adults in keeping their dreams whole while cultivating an awareness of current reality around them.
2. Mental Models: Becoming more aware of the sources of our thinking;
3. Shared Vision: Fostering commitment to a common purpose;

4. Team Learning: Transforming our skills of collective thinking;
5. Systems Thinking: Developing awareness of complexity, interdependencies, change and leverage.

In *The World are Flat*, Friedman (2007) details the challenges and opportunities for individual empowerment during this time of globalization. He recognizes the importance of (a) learning how to learn; (b) navigation skills; (c) passion and curiosity; and (d) encouraging the development of creativity.

Together, these ideas led me to ask, where is *the tipping point* (Gladwell, 2002)? My inquiry led me to examine a wide range of work related to education. I have found resonance with the ideas of Daniel Pink's writing on *a whole new mind* (2006) concerning the value of "right-brain thinkers" and motivation (2011). Pink has called attention to the predicted values of success for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace that need attending to in education in helping a child to grow and develop as a learner. This includes a focus on recognizing a different kind of mind that is able in a myriad of ways: creative problem solving, working well individually and in groups, understanding how complex ideas/things are put together, and to understand how meaning/messages are conveyed. These may not happen in isolation, but requires paying attention to motivation in terms of autonomy, mastery and purpose. Being a long time reader of the multiple intelligence work of Howard Gardner led me to his work *Five Minds for the Future* (2006). Here, Gardner suggests developing the capacity of the mind in the following cognitive abilities:

1. **Disciplinary mind:** Mastery of major schools of thought (including, science, math, and history) and of at least one professional craft;
2. **Synthesizing mind:** Ability to integrate ideas from different disciplines or spheres into a coherent whole and to communicate that integration to others;
3. **Creating mind:** Capacity to uncover and clarify new problems, questions, and phenomena;
4. **Respectful mind:** Awareness of an appreciation for differences among human beings;
5. **Ethical mind:** Fulfillment of one's responsibilities as a worker and citizen.

My interest in organizational change with roots in authentic, relational, and hopeful leadership led me to the writings of Margaret Wheatley (2006, 2009, 2011) who has pushed the envelope of thinking in these realms to promote social change. These resources have created an on-going internal dialogue that asks how they might apply to the field of education as I understand it. However, this consequently prompted my inquiry into the current literature on education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century which substantiates Wheatley's points.

Bellanca and Brandt (2010) address the skills they believe are needed to equip students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, emphasizing that both knowledge and skills such as problem solving and critical thinking are interdependent and needed. Trilling and Fadel (2009) advocate for three main categories of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills: learning and innovation skills, digital literacy skills, and life and career skills. Wagner (2008) also draws together the challenges for education in addressing globalization, motivation, and the need for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Hayes Jacobs (2010) served as the chief editor for *Curriculum 21: Essential Education for a Changing World* that makes a convincing case for transforming education in addressing student preparation for the future. The volume provides insights into the way that we have previously been living in a world of answers and that

now the premise is that we live in a world of questions. As such, education needs to extend its vision past the academic curriculum to include examination of how we think, question, wonder, and create as well as consider optimal student engagement. The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills promotes and advocates for 21<sup>st</sup> century readiness for every student by providing a skills framework for use in education. It appears to me that *the envelope is being pushed*. The field of education is being pressed to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It seems to me this calls for innovative measures and novel concepts; or, a way of applying the tried and true with a new spin appropriate to our times.

### THE CORE – LEADERSHIP

In the course of this research study, I have believed that effective school leadership is invaluable to student and school performance and that school leadership based in appreciative practices allows for the dynamism and flexibility needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century environment. In my own appreciative learning, I carried on this research project and attempted to apply these principles in my day-to-day work. In my work as a facilitator of learning amongst stakeholder groups, I have witnessed and been part of what Bob and Megan Tschannen-Moran call “the power of conversations” in their ability to transform schools one conversation at a time (2010). In response to using collaborative inquiries, the common language that evolves in collective learning results in closeness and cohesion (Robinson & Rose, 2007). Development of a team mindset (goals, roles, relationships, strategies, communication, spirit, leadership) increases group capacity and performance (Whitney, Trostn-Bloom, Cherney, & Frey, 2004). Scores of professional conversations reinforce the importance of teambuilding and creating community. Trust matters, especially in school leadership. Trust and leadership have a symbiotic relationship and must be well cared for (Covey, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

The resource that affected my learning most during this research study, apart from the AI-specific resources, was *Generative Leadership: Shaping New Futures for Today's Schools* (Klimek, Ritzenhein, & Sullivan, 2008). These authors believe the one component essential to any constructive and effective change in American schools is *leadership*. They believe the foundational elements to be generativity, living systems principles, and the brain/mind system. Generative school leadership requires the understanding of the elements and weaving them together into a new way of seeing a school. This means ‘giving it wings’ in seeing and utilizing previously unseen pathways for action towards building capacity while tapping into the creativity of the entire school. (p. 47). “The central task of generative leaders is to create an environment that is open to questioning, innovation, and one in which the living system properties of identity, information and relationships all flourish” (p. 57). The authors offer tools and processes to shift modes of thinking in schools, among them Appreciative Inquiry and World Café (Bojer, Roehl, Knuth, & Magner, 2008; Brown & Isaacs, 2005). In addition, the authors recommend that each person further develop their the six hallmarks of generative school leadership: (1) Deepen personal knowledge; (2) Blend living systems theory with practice; (3) Promote professional conversations; (4) Engage in personal reflection; (5) Lead toward a desired culture; and (6) Rely on creativity and innovation (p. 87-92).

The cycle of my investigation has come full circle. From my initial forays into *Appreciative Leaders: In the Eye of the Beholder* (Schiller et al), I have grown in understanding and practice of Appreciative Leadership in what Whitney et al. refer to as *becoming* and *being Appreciative Leadership*. I have practiced AL within my own school duties and educational out-reach projects, and in performing this research study, I have contributed to the organizational school practice of AL. Now, I aim to continue encouraging the same in my future work with schools.

## Epilogue

### THE FINALE

As I bring this research project/story to a close, I share a fitting passage from the *AI Narrative Principle*, from Barrett and Fry (2005):

Stories provide coherence. A coherent sense of movement and direction is central to a meaningful life. Without them, life is a series of random, unconnected happenings. The past, present, and future are not separate unconnected stages, but rather beginnings, middles, and endings – parts, in other words, of a story in progress. We rely upon stories to make our lives meaningful to ourselves and to one another. Sharing stories also builds bonds. By engaging in stories, we connect with others and we learn. (p. 50).

This research study reflects my attempt to (re)create and make use of stories to build coherence and meaning for myself, participants in the study, and schools interested in this discourse. Language has been used to *create a world* and as the vehicle for making sense of it (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). Along the way, there have been voices missing ... voices reluctant to enter the dialogue, to share their words and to shape a new meaning of school leadership and this still presents a challenge which must be overcome for *Appreciative School Leadership* to be fully operational. In the social constructionist disposition, there is still more room for dialogue and new realities to emerge in meeting the destiny of 21<sup>st</sup> century education.

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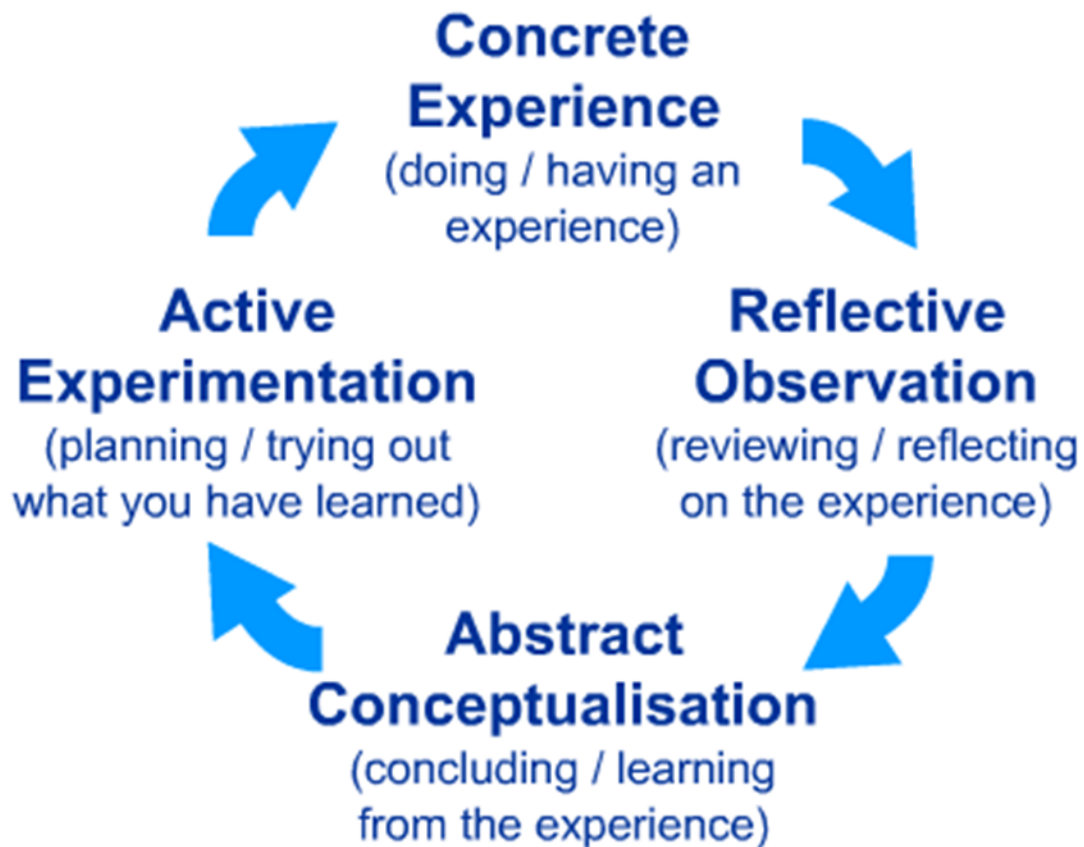
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## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX 1

### KOLB'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE



## **APPENDIX 2**

### **THE 21 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL LEADER**

(Marzano, Waters, & McNulty)

1. Affirmation
2. Change Agent
3. Contingent Rewards
4. Communication
5. Culture
6. Discipline
7. Flexibility
8. Focus
9. Ideals/Beliefs
10. Input
11. Intellectual Stimulation
12. Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
13. Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
14. Monitoring/Evaluating
15. Optimizer
16. Order
17. Outreach
18. Relationships
19. Resources
20. Situational Awareness
21. Visibility

## APPENDIX 3

### THE FIVE ORIGINAL PRINCIPLES OF AI

(Cooperrider & Whitney; Kelm)

#### **The Constructionist Principle**

- Reality and Identity are Co-created
- Truth is Local. There is no absolute truth
- We See Things as We Are
- We Are Deeply Interconnected
- Words Create Worlds. Reality is constructed through language

#### **The Poetic Principle**

- Life Experience is Rich
- We Have Habits of Seeing
- Whatever We Focus On, Grows
- Find What We Want More of, Not Less of
- Develop an Appreciate Eye

#### **The Simultaneity Principle**

- We Live in the World Our Questions Create
- Change Begins the Moment We Question
- The Unconditional Positive Question is transformational
- Develop Your Sense of Wonder

#### **The Anticipatory Principle**

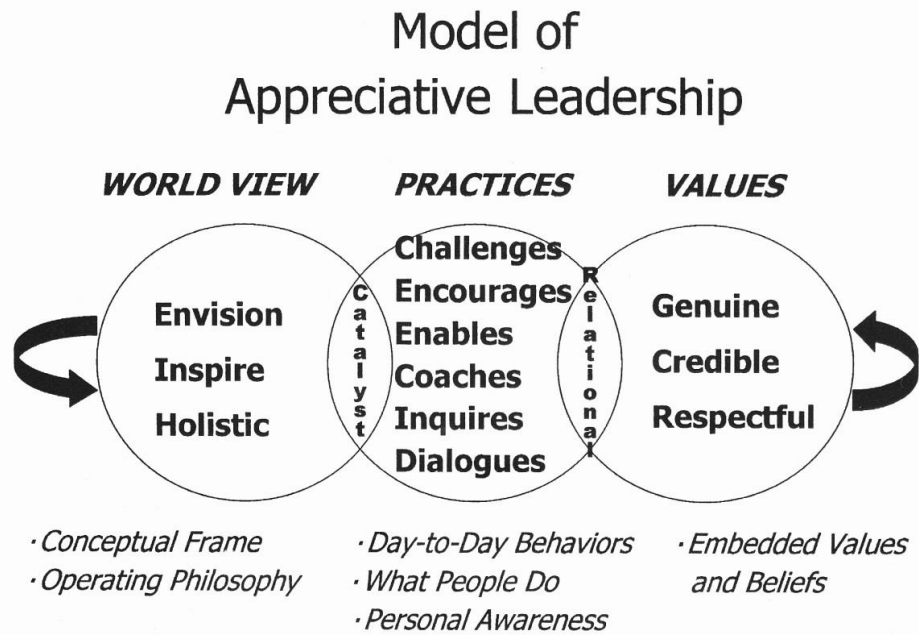
- Positive Images Create Positive Futures
- Vision is Fateful
- Create Vision Before Decisions
- What We Believe, We Conceive
- Big Change Begins Small

#### **The Positive Principle**

- Positive Emotions Broaden Thinking
- The Positive Core expands as it is affirmed and appreciated
- Identify and Leverage Strengths

## APPENDIX 4

### MODEL OF APPRECIATIVE LEADERSHIP BY SCHILLER, HOLLAND & RILEY



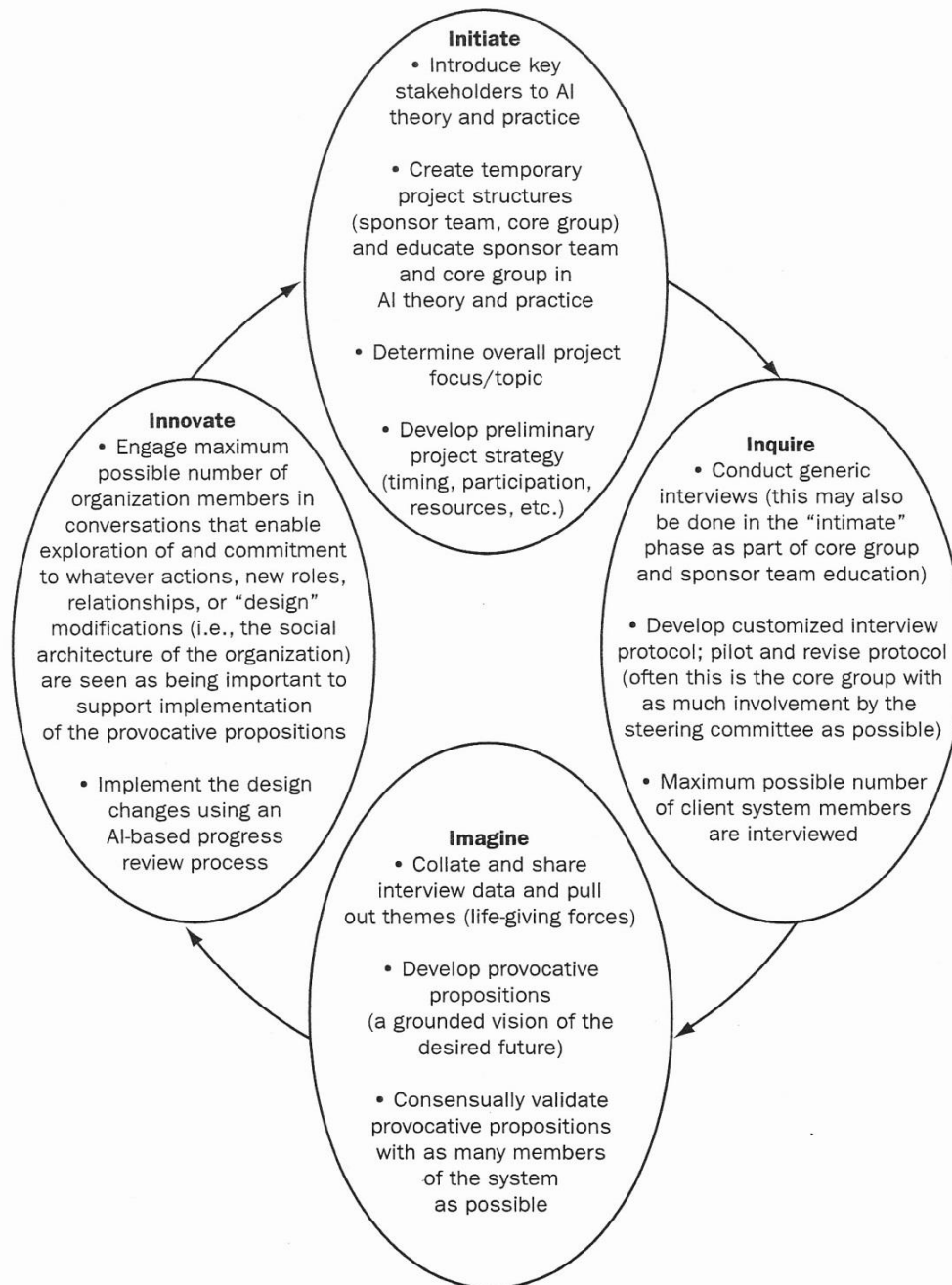
**(FIGURE A)**

Source Deanna Riley



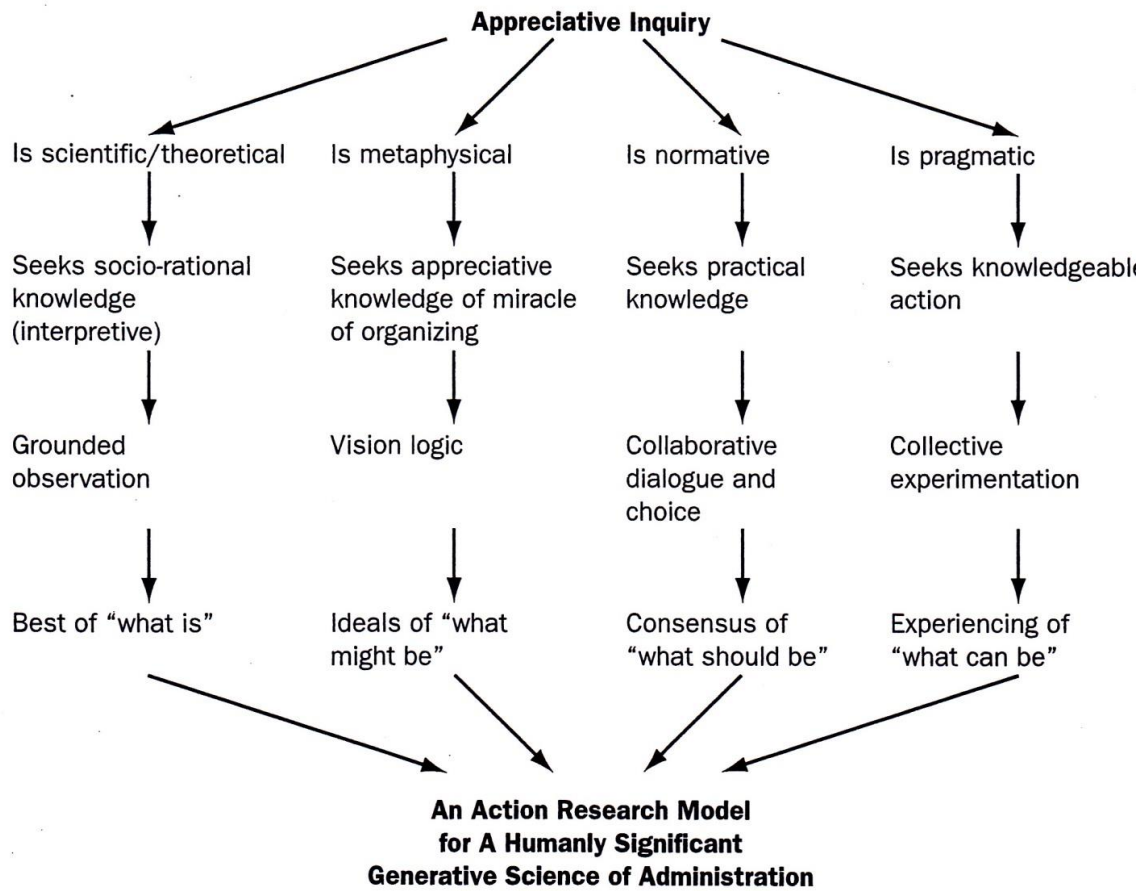
## APPENDIX 5

### GEM INITIATIVE'S 4-D MODEL



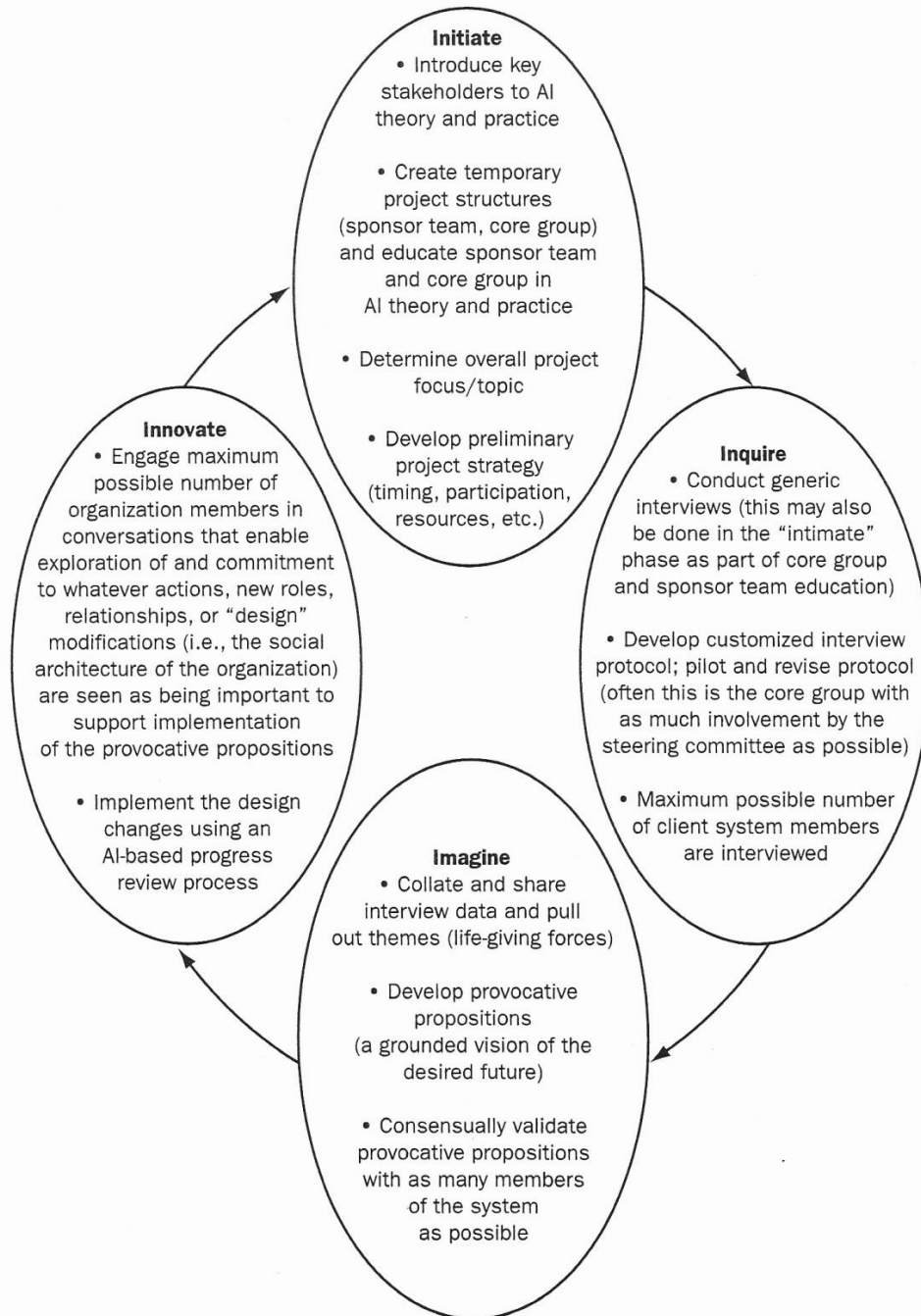
## APPENDIX 6

### DIMENSIONS OF AI MODEL BY COOPERRIDER AND SRIVASTVA (1987)



## APPENDIX 7

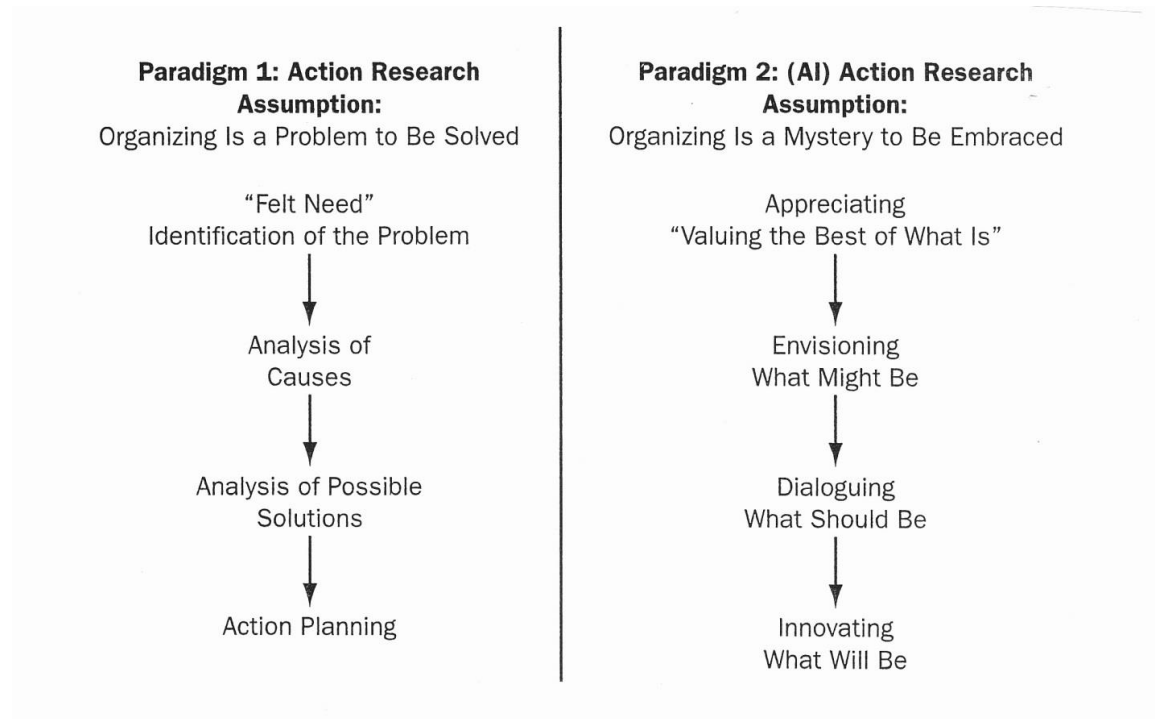
### MOHR/JACOBGAARD FOUR-I MODEL



## APPENDIX 8

### PARADIGM 1 VERSUS PARADIGM 2 ACTION RESEARCH MODELS

Cooperrider and Srivastva



## APPENDIX 9

### APPRECIATIVE LEADERSHIP MANIFESTO

by Jack Riacchiuto

1. We want to honor the resources people bring to their work as deeply as we honor the resources of the earth.
2. We want to do business in a way that supports abundance rather than scarcity.
3. We want to understand that the sustainability of any community depends on its capacity for appreciation.
4. We want to base our performance on what we appreciate rather than what we fear.
5. We want to visualize a community of work that's organized by its capabilities and opportunities.
6. We want to define leadership as those who take the lead with a radically appreciative focus.
7. We want to trust in our happiness as a more sustainable motivator than our unhappiness.
8. We want to spend more time measuring that which we want to increase than what we want to decrease.
9. We want to make business decisions in ways that serve this generation and those to follow.
10. We want appreciative organizations that support local living economies.
11. We want Appreciative Leaders who seek the optimum rather than maximum or minimum.
12. We want to respect the profound differences between leadership and management in the growth of an organization.
13. We want leaders who have durable faith in the seen and unseen capabilities of their people.
14. We want to fill leadership positions with people who have leadership capabilities.
15. We want to trust people's innate appreciation for order in their work.
16. We want to ask people to base their work on their dreams for the best outcomes possible.
17. We want people to bring all of their strengths to their work.
18. We want people to understand the depth and breadth of their strengths.
19. We want to understand our "weaknesses" as strengths used at the the wrong time.
20. We want to awaken in everyone their capacity for passion in their work.
21. We want to create alignment between our passions and the passions of our markets.
22. We want to understand the role of knowledge in a holistic way.
23. We want to translate our passions into measurable performance targets.
24. We want our passions to move us beyond the boundaries of our comfort zones.
25. We want to hold people accountable for understanding their successes and the causes of their successes.
26. We want to help everyone see that success is about the transfer of existing strengths to new situations.
27. We want to help everyone understand that they already have what it takes to succeed.
28. We want to understand that success is about alignment.
29. We want to grow communities of work that empower people with a sustainable sense of self-confidence.
30. We want to engage in work that honors our limitations.

31. We want to create organizations on the understanding that organizations are always self-organizing whether we see them that way or not.
32. We want leaders to be in constant search and creation of new opportunities to help people manifest their personal and shared capabilities.
33. We want to totally reinvent how we define and deal with outcomes we call “failure”.
34. We want leaders who are passionate about the efforts and achievements of others.
35. We want leaders who are present, proactive, creative, and dependable.
36. We want organizations designed to allow everyone to share in networks of leadership.
37. We want to have a deep understanding of the strengths of those we hire.
38. We want strengths-based performance feedback that inspires and empowers.
39. We want to understand that turnover is inevitable and base it on the growth of people.
40. We want to support people’s continuous growth with mentoring and coaching.
41. We want to base our ability to differentiate ourselves in our market on our ability to value the uniqueness of our people.
42. We want leaders whose use of time aligns with their passions and strengths and those of the organization.
43. We want leaders who are skillful facilitators of appreciative consensus.
44. We want leaders who thrive on change.
45. We want leaders who are more passionate about collaborations than hierarchy.
46. We want leaders who are good at virally infecting people with passion through skillful and appreciative storytelling.
47. We want leaders who do enough self-care to sustain strong energy levels through times of challenge.
48. We want leaders whose appreciation at work is simply an expression of an entire lifestyle of appreciation.
49. We want to design every aspect of organization from an intention to unleash passions, strengths, and opportunities.
50. We want leaders who know how to foster a culture of appreciation.
51. We want leaders who help people practice self-appreciation in everything.
52. We want strengths-based teams.
53. We want organizations known for creating entrepreneurs.
54. We want organizations that foster informal environments to cultivate their rich network of relationships.
55. We want to base continuous improvement opportunities on the passions and strengths of people.
56. We want to understand that partnership relationships outperform customer-supplier relationships.
57. We want to create learning organizations.
58. We want to create micro-communities where learning can thrive.
59. We want to continuously cultivate the next generation of Appreciative Leadership.
60. We want to expect that appreciative organizations have unlimited potential.

## APPENDIX 10

### 5 CORE STRATEGIES OF APPRECIATIVE LEADERSHIP

#### **INQUIRY - Ask positively powerful questions.**

*Inquiry* lets people know that you value them and their contributions. When you ask people to share their thoughts and feelings – their stories of success or ideas for the future – and you sincerely listen to what they have to say, you are telling them, “I value you and your thinking.”

#### **ILLUMINATION - Bring out the best of people and situations.**

*Illumination* helps people understand how they can best contribute. Through the practices of illumination you can help people learn about their strengths and the strengths of others. You give them confidence and encouragement to express themselves, take risks, and support others in working from their strengths.

#### **INCLUSION - Engage with people to coauthor the future.**

*Inclusion* gives people a sense of belonging. When you practice inclusion, you open the door for collaboration and co-creation. This, in turn, creates an environment in which people feel they are a part of something. When they feel part of something, they care for it.

#### **INSPIRATION - Awaken the creative spirit.**

*Inspiration* provides people with a sense of direction. By forging a vision and a path forward, you give people hope and unleash energy. These are the foundations for innovation and sustainable high performance.

#### **INTEGRITY - Make choices for the good of the whole.**

*Integrity* lets people know that they are expected to give their best for the greater good, and that they can trust others to do the same. When you lead with integrity, people know they can depend on you to connect them to the whole. Your example sets a standard for others to follow.

*(By Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader; 2010)*

## APPENDIX 11

### APPRECIATIVE LEADERSHIP THEMES, FORMATIVE IDEAS, AND PRINCIPLES

AL Themes from Schiller, Holland, & Riley	AL Formative Ideas from Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders are belief-based with explicit spiritual orientation and practices;</li> <li>• Leadership lives in the group, not in any one person;</li> <li>• Multiple truths exist in ways of thinking, doing, and being;</li> <li>• Appreciative Leaders have an unwavering commitment to bringing out the best in themselves and others;</li> <li>• Appreciative Leaders find generative forces in their many circumstances and multiple systems;</li> </ul>	<p>AL is the relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power – to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance – to make a positive difference in the world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's about relational capacity;</li> <li>• A positive world view;</li> <li>• It turns potential into positive power;</li> <li>• Sets positive ripples in motion;</li> </ul>

#### Positive and Appreciative Leadership Principles from Lewis and Moore

- Leadership as relational
- Leadership as balance between control and direction
- Leadership as belief in the value of everyone's voice and experience
- Leadership as recognizing the importance of shared importance
- Leadership as integrity
- Leadership as inclusion
- Leadership as searching for what works
- Leadership as celebrating everyday issues
- Leadership as getting out of the way
- Leadership as being bold and taking risks
- Leadership as creating connections and synchronism
- Leadership as an emergent, iterative, learning process



## **APPENDIX 12**

### **PARTICIPANT INVITATION**

Fond members of the former Core Administrative Team,

I am writing to formally invite you to the Appreciative Inquiry into Appreciative Leadership to be held on Saturday and Sunday, June 4th and 5th. I greatly appreciate your willingness to come together to participate in this event. The goals of this weekend are two-fold: (1) to reflect upon and identify those successful leadership practices that are congruent with the concepts of Appreciative Leadership that will serve for my doctoral dissertation; and (2) to re-generate our own enthusiasm as Appreciative Leaders for future work.

The goals practically translate into the telling and celebration of successes that we had during our time together as the Core Team. I will be sharing with you the formal definitions of Appreciative Leadership as we seek together to identify successful practices of school Appreciative Leadership - something that to-date, has not been addressed in the current literature, nor research. You will conduct interviews with each other in order to capture the essences of the stories in thought-catchers to later share in group discussions. You will also be asked to create some documents together as part of the process and product of the inquiry. I am confident that we will be able to move expediently along in our day and a half together through the four phases of a 5-D Appreciative Inquiry Model - Define (Appreciative Leadership), Discover, Dream, and Design - ending with a recommended set of conditions for making use of Appreciative School Leadership.

Interestingly, in this unique qualitative case study, I will need to assume the roles of the researcher and facilitator of the Appreciative Inquiry. As such, I will not be an active participant in the process other than as the facilitator of the AI process. As a researcher, I will be excitedly gathering my data from taking notes of the proceedings, the recorded interviews and group discussions as well as the group created documents. Following this weekend, I will be performing an analysis of the data for use in my doctoral dissertation. In the reporting of the findings of the study, your identity will not be disclosed. I am very much looking forward to both my roles and again am very thankful for your participation in making all of this possible.

Regarding logistics: I have scheduled out our days, which run from 8:30 to 4:30 on Saturday, and from 8:30 to 1:00 on Sunday. Sherry has most graciously made her home available to us for the two days, complete with lodging. Meals and snacks will be provided throughout with a culminating lunch on Sunday at a local restaurant. Attached is the thought catcher and schedule, which you may look over but do not need to do anything with prior to your arrival. I will have printed copies for you as we begin the weekend. The only things that you will need to bring with you are smiles and your integral selves - though you may wish to bring along your favorite writing utensil, music, and your toothbrush.

## Appendices

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding the weekend.  
With warmest regards,

Jeffery L. Fifield

## APPENDIX 13

### Protocol & Thought-Catcher

#### APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY LEARNING TEAM PROCESS AGENDA FOR DAY 1 AND 2

##### Day 1

Time	Activity	Purpose/Description
8:30-9:15	Opening Team Learning Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm Welcome Message to all of the members of the AI Learning Team in reviewing the purpose of the activity and the value that each person brings to it.</li> <li>• Setting the Stage and Framing the Time: Participants are invited to list their high point events at CM during 2002-2008 on a timeline in creating a sense of shared ownership and safety.</li> <li>• Establish a Full Value Contract through group consensus for expected group behavior.</li> </ul> <p>These two days of inquiry are designed to discover the underlying patterns and their meaning from an individual and collective basis.</p>
9:15-9:40	Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of the 2-day AI Learning Team activities.</li> <li>• Introduction/review of Appreciative Inquiry.</li> <li>• The 4-D's of the 5-D Cycle that will be used.</li> <li>• The purpose of the study.</li> </ul> <p>*Thought-Catchers are handed out. These are participant workbooks that provide the following: agenda, key concepts, worksheets with activity directions, areas for note taking, and valuations. These will be collected at the end of the exercise, reviewed and returned to the participants.</p>
9:40-9:55	D-1: Defining Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciative Leadership (AL) is identified as the topic of exploration in this study. AI Learning Team members are briefed as to the themes and formative ideas of AL (Appendix 11).</li> </ul>
9:55-	Break	

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10:05		
10:05-10:40	D-2: Discovery Stage Paired Interview #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction to semi-structured participant paired interviews; pairings, directions provided for conducting the interview, (Appendix 16) hand out and review the Thought Catcher interview guide (Appendix 17).</li> <li>● Semi-structured participant paired interviews are conducted. The goal is to discover and exchange stories that include high point leading experiences and to form the philosophical basis for using Appreciative Inquiry as a process to generate and collect qualitative data.</li> </ul>
10:40-11:05	D-2: Discovery Stage Whole Group Discussion: Debriefing of the semi-structured paired interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The participants are invited to share their experience with the semi-structured participant paired interview process. The goal is for participants to connect in a whole group discussion and to begin to understand the AI process (Appendices 18 &amp; 19)</li> </ul>
11:05-12:00	D-2: Discovery Stage Whole Group Discussion #1: Discovering the Positive Core – High Point Leading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction by partner and share the best example of a high point leadership. A best example is one that the interviewer felt the interviewee shared that has the most relevant characteristics highlighting a high peak experience. Participants are asked to share notes from the Thought-catchers (Appendix 20), allowing each participant time to appreciatively share about his/her partner.</li> <li>● Shared highlights are listed on poster sheet as a visual. Participants will review for accuracy and confirm (member checking).</li> <li>● After all participants have had the opportunity to share, they then will be asked to begin a deep inquiry into school leadership. They will discuss patterns of high point experiences that they heard that support the examples presented. These patterns will be noted on a poster sheet. A member check will be completed.</li> <li>● Members will then be asked to consider the poster sheet that lists the patterns of the high peak experiences with the Appreciative Leadership Themes, Principles, and Formative</li> </ul>

		<p>Ideas for connections (Appendix 11). A list of these connections and their meaning will be completed and checked by the members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the list of high point experience-AL connections the participants will be asked to elaborate upon the leadership practices that accompanied these, either independently or collectively so as to generate a list of AL school practices that contributed to the high point experiences. This list will be member checked by the group.</li> </ul>
12:00-12:30	<b>Lunch</b>	
12:30-1:10	D-2: Discovery Stage Paired Interview #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand out the second section of the Thought-catcher interview guide (Appendix 21).</li> <li>• Participants conduct semi-structured participant paired interviews with each other. The goal is to discover stories of high point leadership experiences with individual and team contributions to the school community (Appendix 22).</li> </ul>
1:10-1:40	D-2: Discovery Stage Whole Group Discussion #2: Discovering the Positive Core – High Point Leading Individually/Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction by partner and share the best example of a high point leading experience. A best example is one that the interviewer felt the interviewee shared that has the most relevant characteristics highlighting a high peak experience. Participants are asked to share notes from the Thought-catchers (Appendix 23), allowing each participant time to appreciatively share about his/her partner.</li> <li>• Shared highlights are listed on poster sheet as a visual. Participants will review for accuracy and confirm (member checking).</li> <li>• After all participants have had the opportunity to share, they then will be asked to discuss patterns of high point experiences that they heard that support the examples presented. These patterns will be noted on a poster sheet. A member check will be completed.</li> <li>• Members will then be asked to consider the poster sheet that lists the patterns of the high peak experiences with the Appreciative</li> </ul>

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		<p>Leadership Themes, Principles, and Formative Ideas for connections (Appendix 11). A list of these connections will be completed and checked by the members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From the list of high point experience-AL connections the participants will be asked to elaborate upon the leadership practices that accompanied these, either independently or collectively so as to generate a list of AL school practices that contributed to the high point experiences. This list will be member checked by the group.</li> </ul>
1:40-1:50	Break	
1:50-2:30	D-2: Discovery Stage Paired Interview #3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hand out the third section of the Thought-catcher interview guide (Appendix 24).</li> <li>Participants conduct semi-structured participant paired interviews with each other. The goal is to discover stories of high point leadership experiences related more specifically to individual leadership. (Appendix 25).</li> </ul>
2:30-3:00	D-2: Discovery Stage Whole Group Discussion #3: Discovering the Positive Core – Individual Leadership strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction by partner and share the best example of a high point leading experience. A best example is one that the interviewer felt the interviewee shared that has the most relevant characteristics highlighting a high peak experience (Appendix 26). Participants are asked to share notes from the Thought-catchers (Appendix 24), allowing each participant time to appreciatively share about his/her partner.</li> <li>Shared highlights are listed on poster sheet as a visual. Participants will review for accuracy and confirm (member checking).</li> <li>After all participants have had the opportunity to share, they then will be asked to discuss patterns of high point experiences that they heard that support the examples presented. These patterns will be noted on a poster sheet. A member check will be completed.</li> <li>Members will then be asked to consider the poster sheet that lists the patterns of the high</li> </ul>

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		<p>peak experiences with the Appreciative Leadership Themes, Principles, and Formative Ideas for connections (Appendix 11). A list of these connections will be completed and checked by the members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the list of high point experience-AL connections the participants will be asked to elaborate upon the leadership practices that accompanied these, either independently or collectively so as to generate a list of AL school practices that contributed to the high point experiences. This list will be member checked by the group.</li> </ul>
3:00-3:10	Break	
3:10-4:20	Whole Group Discussion: Introduction to the mythic metaphor, Creating a Core Team mythic metaphor and drawing a group metaphor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute and review the description of a mythic metaphor worksheet (Appendix 27)</li> <li>• Review of mythic metaphors</li> <li>• Based on the charts created during the day of the positive core attributes that were highlighted members are asked to create a group mythic metaphor that best reflects the Core Team Leadership Team (Appendix 28).</li> <li>• They may refer to the Thought-catchers. The goal is to choose a visual representation (mythic metaphor) that illustrates the strengths that each participant feels s/he possesses.</li> <li>• Using large flipchart paper and coloring supplies, participants will be asked to draw their mythic metaphor (Appendix 28).</li> <li>• Participants will be asked to share the mythic metaphor that they have chosen and explain how it represents their strengths.</li> </ul>
4:20-4:30	Summary	Day 1 in review and a preview of Day 2 – Dream and Design.

## APPENDIX 13

(Protocol & Thought-Catcher, cont.)

### Day 2

Time	Activity	Purpose/Description
8:30-9:00	Reflect on prior day's learning, sharing of notable quotes, and introduce Day 2 with thoughts on positive image – positive action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome</li> <li>• Sharing highlights from the previous days work on the Define and Discovery stages. A review based on data from the large flipchart paper and the images of the mythic metaphors created. The flipchart sheets will be posted around the room for viewing (Appendix 29). Member checking by asking the participants to check once again for accuracy confirming the data will be a part of the process.</li> <li>• Notable quotes captured from Day 1 will be shared.</li> <li>• Introduction to the day's work with understanding of positive image-positive action.</li> </ul>
9:00-9:30	D-3: Dream Stage Paired Interview #4 Envisioning the future for effective school leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the data from the flipchart sheets as the basis from the Discovery Stage, Day 1, participants will be asked to individually imagine what the most effective school leadership could be by describing a future vision for the most effective school leadership for optimal student learning with the use of the Thought Catcher – Dream - Worksheet #6 (Appendix 30). The goal is to imagine and define the future for effective school leadership for optimal student learning.</li> <li>• Using the Thought Catcher – Dream - Worksheet #6, participants will share with a paired partner their future vision for highly functioning school leadership. Next, participants will imagine that 5 years have since passed so they can describe what optimal CM school leadership could look like (Appendix 31).</li> </ul>



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9:30-10:00	D-3: Dream Stage  Whole Group Discussion #5:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants will share with the group their future vision for effective school leadership. Using the future vision for effective school leadership ideas that were shared and the 3 wishes members can collectively create an opportunity/concept map (Appendix 32).</li> </ul>
10:00-10:20	D-3: Dream Stage Capture the vision in a dream statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review opportunity/concept map</li> <li>The whole group comes together to collaboratively create a dream statement using the most important ideas from the opportunity/concept map so they can capture the dream in one statement (Appendix 33).</li> </ul>
10:20-10:30	Break	
10:30-11:30	D-4: Design Stage Design Possibilities Map for school leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce concepts of appreciative organization design (Appendix 34) to the group.</li> <li>Using the Design Possibilities Framework (Appendix 35) the previously constructed Dream Statement is placed at the center of the design possibilities map.</li> <li>The group brainstorms all the key relationships that will impact or be impacted by the dream if accomplished.</li> <li>The group brainstorms all the formal organization design elements that will influence the accomplishment of the dream. The group will be provided with examples of formal organization design elements (Appendix 36).</li> <li>The group selects the high-impact organization design elements that they feel are a priority and that they want to work on.</li> </ul>
11:30-12:15	D-4: Design Stage Crafting Provocative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce Provocative Propositions and the steps for crafting them (Appendix 37).</li> </ul>

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	Propositions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group members write provocative propositions for the high-impact design elements that were selected. School leadership practices required for support of the propositions are identified.</li> <li>• Group members share the provocative proposition amongst their group for accuracy and confirmation through member checking.</li> </ul>
12:15-1:00	Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of key group-created documents: positive leadership core, dream statement and provocative propositions (Appendix 38).</li> <li>• Compare and contrast with Appreciative Leadership Themes, Principles and Formative Ideas (Appendix 11).</li> <li>• Valuation of Appreciative Inquiry Team Learning Summit by group members (Appendix 39).</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 14

### INTRODUCTION LETTER OF CONSENT

April, 2011

Dear former member of the Colegio Maya Core Administration Team:

**PURPOSE:** I am a doctoral student in the Taos Institute – Tilburg University PhD Program who is conducting research that specifically focuses on exploring the high peak leadership experiences during the years 1999 to 2008 at Colegio Maya. This study proposes to explore the effective leadership practices and to identify those that are congruent with the themes, principals and formative ideas of Appreciative Leadership. The overarching intent of this study is to understand the value of using Appreciative School Leadership. Research will be conducted prior to and during an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Learning Process which will occur during the month of June 2011 at the home of Dr. Sherry Miller, *Las Tres Gracias*, in Antigua, Guatemala.

**PARTICIPANT SELECTION & EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES:** You have been invited to voluntarily share your stories and perspective on effective school leadership practices derived from your time working as a member of the Colegio Maya Core Administrative Team during the years of 2002 to 2008. You will be asked to participate in the two day Appreciative Inquiry Learning Process which will include one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions and the creation of participant documents.

No minors or members of vulnerable populations are participating in this study. There are no known risks or discomforts, physical, psychological, or social, connected to this study.

**BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY:** The results of this study have the potential to contribute to current literature on effective school leadership by describing high functioning Appreciative School Leadership practices and the necessary ecological conditions for them to be employed in other schools. The significance of this study will provide an expanded understanding of Appreciative Leadership as applied within the school context.

**REFUSAL/WITHDRAWAL/CONFIDENTIALITY:** Participation in this study is voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate. Your privacy will be protected and confidentiality of information guaranteed. By signing one copy of this form, you are granting your permission to participate in this study. Findings from this research may be presented at conferences or result in publication in scholarly journals. If this is the case, you are guaranteed anonymity. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and voluntarily agree to participate in the study. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or fear of reprisal.

If you have questions regarding this study, please contact me at home at 502-2365-7685. A copy of this form is provided for your records. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Jeffery L. Fifield

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I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 15

### PROTOCOL: OPENING TEAM LEARNING ACTIVITY

<p><b>Message of Welcome</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b></p> <p>To welcome participants to the day and event that sets the stage for a warm and productive interaction between all members.</p>	<p><b>Participants:</b></p> <p>All participants</p> <p><b>Time:</b></p> <p>15 minutes to welcome the participants, participate in an Angel cards valuing activity, and create the timeline.</p> <p>15 minutes to create the Full Value Contract (group expectations for behavior, communication, etc).</p> <p>15 minutes review the created timeline.</p> <p><b>Materials:</b></p> <p>Angel cards ; Wall timeline pre-posted; colored markers; flipchart of poster sheets with easel; refreshment table for continued access;</p>
<p><b>Instructions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give friendly greeting to participants as they arrive.</li> <li>• Explain the Angel card exercise.</li> <li>• Explain the wall timeline posted in the room and invite participants to list high point events they have been a part of while at CM.</li> <li>• Allow participants to choose their refreshments and seating.</li> <li>• Explain to participants the role of creating a Full Value Contract together in terms of establishing a climate where we feel safe in sharing our goals, experiences, opinions and ideas.</li> <li>• On a large poster sheet, participants create the list of mutual expectations. As the facilitator, it will be important to include to the list that everything is written/recorded for the purposes of the study, and a reminder that confidentiality will be respected.</li> <li>• Next, review together the wall timeline with the high point events listed putting into practice the Full Value Contract that was created. As the high points are shared, the accompanying question to answer is “What do you suppose made these a high point for you?” While comments are made, ideas</li> </ul>

	will be summarized on a large poster sheet for the group to see as a visual.
<b>Summary and Member Check:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In creating the Full Value Contract for this event by the participants, the understanding is that at any time it is not being complied with, it is the responsibility of the participants to intervene and make sure that it is.</li> <li>• In moving to the next activity, participants will have the opportunity to review the summarized list of what made the events a high point. The facilitator will be checking for understanding, clarifying, and confirming that which was said, was reflected on the large poster sheet.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 16

### PROTOCOL: 2-DAY OVERVIEW AND AI INTRODUCTION

<p><b>Message of Welcome</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b></p> <p>To review the purpose of the study with the participants, present an overview of the 2-day learning team activities that will occur and introduce AI and the 5-D Cycle.</p>	<p><b>Participants:</b></p> <p>All participants – whole group</p> <p><b>Time:</b></p> <p>30 minutes to provide an overview of the 2-day AI Learning Team activities including an introduction to AI, and the first four stages of the 5-D Cycle, and purpose of the study.</p> <p><b>Materials:</b></p> <p>Posters: 2 day schedule of activities; AI Principles; AI 5-D Diagram;</p>
<p><b>Instructions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the purpose of the study with the participants with an overview of what will be happening over the next two days in the learning teams. Introduce the AI and 5-D Cycle. State that I am seeking to (a) learn from you by (b) listening to your stories of high point leadership experiences to (c) understand how they might be representative of Appreciative Leadership.</li> <li>• The AI process is different than the tradition problem solving methodology in that it begins in looking at the good and continues to affirm it. Participants will describe high point experiences in the discovery stage of AI and asked to consider the conditions of Appreciative Leadership to have made them possible. This will be followed by the dream stage where participants will imagine the possibilities of learning what could be in the dream stage. The following stage will ask the participants to propose a design for including Appreciative School Leadership.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary and Member Check:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before moving to the next activity, participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and get clarification.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 17

### TEAM MEMBER THOUGHT CATCHER – DISCOVERY – WORKSHEET INTERVIEW #1

**Guiding Statement:** Think back to the years that you were a member of the *Core Team* and remember when you were most excited about the specific things that were happening at CM. Describe to your partner a high point experience of an event, practice, happening, situation, etc.

What happened? (tell the story)

Was it successful? How do you know?

What was your involvement?

What made it exciting?

Describe how you felt.

Were others involved?

What did you value most about the leadership that was necessary for making this high point experience possible?

What were the other factors that contributed to making this a high point experience?



## APPENDIX 18

### PROTOCOL: PARTICIPANT PAIRED INTERVIEW OF HIGH POINT LEADING EXPERIENCE

<p><b>Purpose:</b> To have the AL Learning Team members conduct semi-structured pair interviews with each other in order to connect in sharing high point leading experiences.</p>	<p><b>Participants:</b> All participants</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 45 minutes (approximately 20 minutes allotted per person to conduct the interview)</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> Handout : Participant Thought-catcher Discovery section; Pens/Pencils, Recorder per pair</p>
<p><b>Instructions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to semi-structured paired interviews; groupings; provide Thought-catcher with instructions for conducting the interview;</li> <li>• Suggested directions for conducting the paired interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Each participant conducts an interview, then gets to be interviewed</li> <li>○ The guiding questions on the Thought-catcher will help provide direction to discover what matters most to the partner.</li> <li>○ Questions may be skipped if the interviewee has not answer.</li> <li>○ Additional questions may be asked for more details by asking who, what, when, why and how questions.</li> <li>○ Actively listen and take notes on the stories heard so that they may be shared by the recorder to the larger group.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• AI Learning Team members conduct semi-structured paired interviews with each other. Members take notes using the Thought-catcher for the Discovery stage. The goal is to exchange a best example of a high experience related to leadership. In addition, each interview will be recorded for research purposes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary and Member Check:</b></p>	<p>Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review and confirm the notes they have taken about their partner's example of a high peak experience, so each participant can be prepared to share in the next activity.</p>

## APPENDIX 19

### PROTOCOL: DEBRIEFING OF SEMI-STRUCTURED PARTICIPANT PAIRED INTERVIEW

<p><b>Purpose:</b> A check-in to have the AL Learning Team members connect in a whole group discussion and to begin to understand the AI process.</p>	<p><b>Participants:</b> Whole group discussion</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 15 minutes</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> Posted Full Value Contract (for reference); Flipchart; markers</p>
<p><b>Instructions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind the participants of the group created Full Value Contract and check for adherence during the interviews.</li> <li>• The participants are invited to share their experience with the semi-structured paired interview process. The goal is for participants to connect in a whole group discussion and understand the AI process. The discussion is centered on the participants' paired interview experience.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary and Member Check:</b></p>	<p>Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review the notes they have taken about their partner's example of a high point experience so they can be prepared to share.</p>

## APPENDIX 20

### PROTOCOL: WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION OF HIGH POINT EXPERIENCES #1

<p><b>Purpose:</b> To have participants from the paired interviews introduce their partner and share a best example of a high point experience.</p>	<p><b>Participants:</b> Whole group</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 55 minutes</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> Handout : Participant Thought-catcher Discovery section; pens/pencils; flipchart; markers</p>
<p><b>Instructions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Remind the participants of the group created Full Value Contract and check for fidelity to the model. Give participants two-three minutes to review the Thought-catcher.</li> <li>● Have participants introduce their partner and share the best example of a high peak experience. Explain that a best example is one that you feel your partner shared that highlights a high peak experience. Participants are asked to share notes from the Thought-catcher, allowing each participant an opportunity to appreciatively share about their partner.</li> <li>● A list of best examples shared from each participant will be generated on a large poster sheet as a visual. This will be reviewed by the participants for accuracy as a form of member checking.</li> <li>● After all participants have had the opportunity to share, they then will be asked to discuss patterns of high point experiences that they heard that support the examples presented. These patterns will be noted on a poster sheet. A member check will be completed.</li> <li>● Members will then be asked to consider the poster sheet that lists the patterns of the high peak experiences with the Appreciative Leadership Themes, Principles, and Formative Ideas for connections (Appendix 9). A list of these connections will be completed and checked by the members.</li> <li>● From the list of high point experience-AL connections the participants will be asked to elaborate upon the leadership practices that accompanied these, either independently or collectively so as to generate a list of AL school practices that contributed to the high point experiences. This list will be member checked by the group.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary and Member Check:</b></p>	<p>Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review the notes they have taken for congruency with the charts of high point leadership experiences and Appreciative Leadership practices.</p>

## APPENDIX 21

### TEAM MEMBER THOUGHT CATCHER – DISCOVERY - WORKSHEET INTERVIEW #2

**Guiding Statement:** Reflect upon the period of school leadership by the *Core Team*. AS A MEMBER OF THIS TEAM What things are you most proud of as a member of this team in providing leadership to the school? Why? Describe them to your partner, remembering to tell the story complete with details.

Provide additional insights to the following questions:

What was done by you, and/or the others of the Core Team in providing effective leadership to the school and the community?

What was the involvement of the other members of the community? What was your involvement together?

What strengths did the Core Team bring to their position of leading the school?

What are your contributions to the Core Team school leadership?

What are the contributions of the other Core Team members to school leadership?

What are the core leadership practices of the Core Team?

## APPENDIX 22

### PROTOCOL: PARTICIPANT PAIRED INTERVIEW OF HIGH POINT LEADING EXPERIENCE – INDIVIDUAL/TEAM PERSPECTIVE

<p><b>Purpose:</b> To have the AL Learning Team members conduct semi-structured pair interviews with each other in order to connect in sharing high point leading experiences related to group leadership.</p>	<p><b>Participants:</b> All participants</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 45 minutes (approximately 20 minutes allotted per person to conduct the interview)</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> Handout : Participant Thought-catcher Discovery section; Pens/Pencils, Recorder per pair</p>
<p><b>Instructions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction to semi-structured paired interviews; groupings; provide Thought-catcher and review instructions for conducting the interview;</li> <li>● Suggested directions for conducting the paired interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Each participant conducts an interview, then gets to be interviewed</li> <li>○ The guiding questions on the Thought-catcher will help provide direction to discover what matters most to the partner.</li> <li>○ Questions may be skipped if the interviewee has not answer.</li> <li>○ Additional questions may be asked for more details by asking who, what, when, why and how questions.</li> <li>○ Actively listen and take notes on the stories heard so that they may be shared by the recorder to the larger group.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● AI Learning Team members conduct semi-structured paired interviews with each other. Members take notes using the Thought-catcher for the Discovery stage. The goal is to exchange a best example of a high experience related to leadership. In addition, each interview will be recorded for research purposes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary and Member Check:</b></p>	<p>Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review and confirm the notes they have taken about their partner's example of a high peak experience, so each participant can be prepared to share in the next activity.</p>

## APPENDIX 23

### PROTOCOL: WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION OF HIGH POINT EXPERIENCES #2

<p><b>Purpose:</b> To have participants from the paired interviews introduce their partner and share a best example of a high point experience.</p>	<p><b>Participants:</b> Whole group</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 55 minutes</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> Handout : Participant Thought-catcher Discovery section; pens/pencils; flipchart; markers</p>
<p><b>Instructions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Remind the participants of the group created Full Value Contract and check for adherence.</li> <li>● Give participants two-three minutes to review the Thought-catcher.</li> <li>● Have participants introduce their partner and share the best example of a high peak experience. Explain that a best example is one that you feel your partner shared that highlights a high peak experience. Participants are asked to share notes from the Thought-catcher, allowing each participant an opportunity to appreciatively share about their partner.</li> <li>● A list of best examples shared from each participant will be generated on a large poster sheet as a visual. This will be reviewed by the participants for accuracy as a form of member checking.</li> <li>● After all participants have had the opportunity to share, they then will be asked to discuss patterns of high point experiences that they heard that support the examples presented. These patterns will be noted on a poster sheet. A member check will be completed.</li> <li>● Members will then be asked to consider the poster sheet that lists the patterns of the high peak experiences with the Appreciative Leadership Themes, Principles and Formative Ideas for connections (Appendix 9). A list of these connections will be completed and checked by the members.</li> <li>● From the list of high point experience-AL connections the participants will be asked to elaborate upon the leadership practices that accompanied these, either independently or collectively so as to generate a list of AL school practices that contributed to the high point experiences. This list will be member checked by the group.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary and Member Check:</b></p>	<p>Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review the notes they have taken for congruency with the charts of high point leadership experiences and Appreciative Leadership practices.</p>

## APPENDIX 24

### TEAM MEMBER THOUGHT CATCHER – DISCOVERY - WORKSHEET INTERVIEW #3

**Guiding Statement:** In reflecting upon your participation in the *Core Team*, tell about an experience when you felt most alive and effective in a team leadership role.

Provide additional insights to the following questions:

What specific core leadership practices do you employ?

What personal strengths do you bring to your position of leadership?

What personal attributes and qualities do you feel are a part of you and your leadership?

Describe your leadership style.

Describe how you believe that others perceive you as a leader.

## APPENDIX 25

### PROTOCOL: PARTICIPANT PAIRED INTERVIEW OF HIGH POINT LEADING EXPERIENCE – INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE

<p><b>Purpose:</b> To have the AL Learning Team members conduct semi-structured pair interviews with each other in order to connect in sharing high point leading experiences related more specifically to individual leadership.</p>	<p><b>Participants:</b> All participants</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 45 minutes (approximately 20 minutes allotted per person to conduct the interview)</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> Handout : Participant Thought-catcher Discovery section; Pens/Pencils, Recorder per pair</p>
<p><b>Instructions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction to semi-structured paired interviews; groupings; provide Thought-catcher and review instructions for conducting the interview;</li> <li>● Suggested directions for conducting the paired interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Each participant conducts an interview, then gets to be interviewed</li> <li>○ The guiding questions on the Thought-catcher will help provide direction to discover what matters most to the partner.</li> <li>○ Questions may be skipped if the interviewee has not answer.</li> <li>○ Additional questions may be asked for more details by asking who, what, when, why and how questions.</li> <li>○ Actively listen and take notes on the stories heard so that they may be shared by the recorder to the larger group.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● AI Learning Team members conduct semi-structured paired interviews with each other. Members take notes using the Thought-catcher for the Discovery stage. The goal is to exchange a best example of a high point experience related to leadership. In addition, each interview will be recorded for research purposes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary and Member Check:</b></p>	<p>Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review and confirm the notes they have taken about their partner’s example of a high peak experience, so each participant can be prepared to share in the next activity.</p>



## APPENDIX 26

### PROTOCOL: WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION OF HIGH POINT EXPERIENCES #3

<p><b>Purpose:</b> To have participants from the paired interviews introduce their partner and share a best example of a high point experience.</p>	<p><b>Participants:</b> Whole group</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 55 minutes</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> Handout : Participant Thought-catcher Discovery section; pens/pencils; flipchart; markers;</p>
<p><b>Instructions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Remind the participants of the group created Full Value Contract and check for adherence.</li> <li>● Give participants two-three minutes to review the Thought-catcher.</li> <li>● Have participants introduce their partner and share the best example of a high peak experience. Explain that a best example is one that you feel your partner shared that highlights a high peak experience. Participants are asked to share notes from the Thought-catcher, allowing each participant an opportunity to appreciatively share about their partner.</li> <li>● A list of best examples shared from each participant will be generated on a large poster sheet as a visual. This will be reviewed by the participants for accuracy as a form of member checking.</li> <li>● After all participants have had the opportunity to share, they then will be asked to discuss patterns of high point experiences that they heard that support the examples presented. These patterns will be noted on a poster sheet. A member check will be completed.</li> <li>● Members will then be asked to consider the poster sheet that lists the patterns of the high peak experiences with the Appreciative Leadership Themes, Principles, and Formative Ideas for connections (Appendix 9). A list of these connections will be completed and checked by the members.</li> <li>● From the list of high point experience-AL connections the participants will be asked to elaborate upon the leadership practices that accompanied these, either independently or collectively so as to generate a list of AL school practices that contributed to the high point experiences. This list will be member checked by the group.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary and Member Check:</b></p>	<p>Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review the notes they have taken for congruency with the charts of high point leadership experiences and Appreciative Leadership practices.</p>

## APPENDIX 27

### **TEAM MEMBER THOUGHT CATCHER – DISCOVERY - WORKSHEET #5 GROUP MYTHIC METAPHOR**

Guiding Statement: Mythic metaphors are an important way of visualizing our connection in a spiritual fashion to people, events and circumstances. In this exercise, by group consensus the group chooses a mythic metaphor that represents the leadership of the Core Team. This should reflect the leadership characteristics, core attributes, and/or key words that were captured in previous exercises.

Example of a mythic metaphor: *A rainbow of possibilities.*

Using the large flipchart paper and coloring supplies, draw a picture of your mythic metaphor.

How does the mythic metaphor represent the group's leadership strengths?

## APPENDIX 28

### PROTOCOL: CREATION OF GROUP METAPHOR

<b>Whole Group Discussion: Creation of Core Leadership Team Mythic Metaphor</b>	
<b>Purpose:</b> To have participants choose a visual representation (mythic metaphor) that illustrates the leadership strengths of the Core Leadership Team and then to create the mythic metaphor using the large flipchart paper and sharing how it represents the group's leadership strengths.	<b>Participants:</b> Whole group sharing and individual participant created document  <b>Time:</b> 40 minutes – Group created metaphor 20 minutes – Sharing how the created mythic metaphor represents the Core Team's leadership strengths
<b>Instructions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute and review the description of a mythic metaphor and the Thought Catcher mythic metaphor worksheet (Appendix 20).</li> <li>• Based on the individual mythic metaphors previously shared and the sense of team, the group chooses a mythic metaphor that is representative of the Core Team's leadership. Participants may refer to the strengths they had listed in the previous exercise on the flipcharts. The goal is to choose a visual representation that illustrates the leadership strengths that participants feel the group possesses.</li> <li>• Using the large flipchart paper and coloring supplies, participants will be asked to draw or create together a mythic metaphor they have chosen to represent their Core Team's strengths. Next the participants can share how the mythic metaphor chosen represents their leadership strengths.</li> </ul>
<b>Summary and Member Check:</b>	Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review for accuracy and confirm the group created mythic metaphor in its relation to the previously created individual mythic metaphors regarding the leadership strengths of the group and each participant.

## APPENDIX 29

### PROTOCOL: REVIEW OF DAY 1 AND INTRODUCTION TO DAY 2

Whole Group: Review of Day 1 and Introduction to Day 2	
<b>Purpose:</b> To reflect on prior day's learning, sharing of notable quotes, and introducing Day 2 with thoughts on positive image-positive action.	<b>Participants:</b> Whole group  <b>Time:</b> 30 minutes  <b>Materials:</b> Large flipchart sheets created on Day 1 posted throughout the room for view;
<b>Instructions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome</li> <li>• Sharing highlights from the previous days work on the Define and Discovery stages. A review based on data from the large flipchart paper and the images of the mythic metaphors created. The flipchart sheets will be posted around the room for viewing. Member checking by asking the participants to check once again for accuracy confirming the data will be a part of the process.</li> <li>• Notable quotes captured from Day 1 will be shared.</li> <li>• Introduction to the day's work with understanding of positive image-positive action.</li> </ul>
<b>Summary and Member Check:</b>	Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review for accuracy and confirm what is written on the flipchart paper and what the participants had heard from Day 1 in the Define and Discovery Stages.

## APPENDIX 30

### TEAM MEMBER THOUGHT CATCHER – DREAM - WORKSHEET #6 (INTERVIEW #4)

#### Part A

Guiding Statement: Our dreams are our hopes. Our dreams are what propel us toward the future. Today we have the opportunity to dream. An AI Dream is to Imagine, “What might be”. The dream is your vision for optimal school leadership.

Challenge: Referring to the high point leadership experiences that you have already described, imagine what the most effective leadership practices could be by describing a future vision for high functioning school leadership.

What 3 wishes do you have for creating high functioning school leadership?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

#### Part B

Guiding Statement: Our dreams can come true. What we focus on becomes closer to realizing our dreams.

Imagine you have left CM for other pursuits, but have come back to CM to celebrate a school anniversary. The year is now 2016. As you continue your tour through CM, you look around and see that the CM community is functioning as you dreamed in support of optimal student learning.

What is happening?

Describe what has helped it to happen.

What is different?

How are the students learning?

What do the classes look like?

## APPENDIX 31

### PROTOCOL: DREAM THREE WISHES AND FIVE YEAR FUTURE VISION

Dream Three Wishes and Five Year Future Vision	
<b>Purpose:</b> To imagine and define the future for effective school leadership.	<b>Participants:</b> Individual and paired  <b>Time:</b> 30 minutes  <b>Materials:</b> Handout of Thought Catcher – Dream – Worksheet #6 (Appendix 23);
<b>Instructions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the data from the flipchart sheets as the basis from the Discovery Stage, Day 1, participants will be asked to individually imagine what the most effective school leadership could be by describing a future vision for high functioning school leadership for optimal student learning with the use of the Thought Catcher – Dream - Worksheet #6 (Appendix 28). The goal is to imagine and define the future for effective school leadership for optimal student learning.</li> <li>Using the Thought Catcher – Dream - Worksheet #6, participants will share with a paired partner their future vision for high functioning school leadership. Next, participants will imagine that 5 years have since passed so they can describe what optimal CM school leadership could look like.</li> </ul>
<b>Summary and Member Check:</b>	Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review and prepare to share the three wishes for future effective school leadership and describe the 5 years in the future scenario.

## APPENDIX 32

### PROTOCOL: SHARE DREAMS, FIVE YEAR FUTURE VISION, AND OPPORTUNITY/CONCEPT MAP

<b>Whole Group: Share Dream with Three Wishes, Five Year Future Vision, and Opportunity/Concept Map</b>	
<p><b>Purpose:</b> To share the imagined future for the high functioning school leadership that you want to see happen, co-constructing an opportunity/concept map with the effective leadership components.</p>	<p><b>Participants:</b> Whole group</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 30 minutes</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> Handout of Thought Catcher – Dream – Worksheet #6 (Appendix 28); flipchart paper; markers; digital recorder; one large 5' x 5' piece of paper on one wall for the whole group opportunity/concept map</p>
<p><b>Instructions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Remind participants of the Full Value Contract that was created together as a reminder of the rights and responsibilities of the participants sharing in the whole group discussion. Each paired team will have the opportunity to share the three wishes for more improved school leadership. Next each member will have the opportunity to share and describe what was happening and what helped to make the scenario happen five years from now at CM (Appendix 28).</li> <li>● The responses that are shared will be listed on flipchart paper. Members will be asked to confirm the accuracy as a form of member checking.</li> <li>● After all of the participants have had the opportunity to share their three wishes and the descriptions for the imagined future, they will be asked to use the data from the flipchart as the basis to collectively create an opportunity/concept map with the future vision school leadership components. The goal of the opportunity/concept map is to have the participants begin to develop a positive guiding image of the future for more effective school leadership.</li> <li>● Creation of the opportunity/concept map: Using the 5' x 5' paper with a circle in the center that says “highly functional school leadership”, members will draw lines out from the center with the opportunity written on the line that defines highly functional school leadership. Participants can refer to the data from the previous sharing. When participants are satisfied with the components necessary for future school leadership, then the process is drawn to a closure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary and Member Check:</b></p>	<p>Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review for accuracy and confirm what is presented in the opportunity/concept map.</p>

## APPENDIX 33

### PROTOCOL: DREAM STATEMENT

Dream Statement	
<p><b>Purpose:</b> To capture the vision of the ideal into one co-constructed dream statement.</p>	<p><b>Participants:</b> Whole group</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 20 minutes</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> Group's co-constructed opportunity/concept map; markers; flipchart paper;</p>
<p><b>Instructions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a whole group, participants will review and discuss the opportunity/concept map to clarify the lines on the map.</li> <li>The following guidelines for constructing the dream statement will be explained (posted on the flipchart): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The dream statement captures the imagined dream for highly functional school leadership.</li> <li>The dream statement is written in the present tense.</li> <li>The dream statement reflects the cliché, be careful what you wish for; it may come true.</li> <li>The dream statement is bold enough to challenge the status quo.</li> <li>The dream statement is grounded enough with examples so it could really happen.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Using the most important ideas from the opportunity/concept map, the group captures the dream in one statement. Each participant has the opportunity to add to/delete/revise the dream statement in a round robin format until everyone agrees on the dream statement that adheres to the dream statement guidelines.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary and Member Check:</b></p>	<p>Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review for accuracy and come to consensus on the one dream statement.</p>



## APPENDIX 34

### CONCEPTS OF APPRECIATIVE ORGANIZATION DESIGN

“First we shape our structures and then our structures shape us.” – Winston Churchill

(from The Appreciative Inquiry Summit, by Ludema, Whitney, Mohr, & Griffin, 2003)

Essential Question: What forms of organizing can bring out the best in people, liberate cooperation, and give form to our highest values and ideals?

- **The Power of Values-based Organization Design**  
Organizations take action around the possibilities that offer the most promise for realizing their values and aspirations.
- **Creating Organization Designs that Liberate**  
With a compelling purpose and set of principles, people are free to organize in any manner that is relevant and consistent with the purpose and principles.
- **Whole System Involvement**  
A living set of commitments capable of developing with the participation and consent of the community.
- **The Joy of Perpetual Designing**  
Organizations must continuously renew themselves to sustain high performance.

## APPENDIX 35

### EXAMPLES OF FORMAL ORGANIZATION DESIGN ELEMENTS

(from The Appreciative Inquiry Summit, by Ludema, Whitney, Mohr, & Griffin, 2003)

- Job descriptions
- Education, training, and leadership development processes
- The organization's policies on social responsibility
- Key organizational strategies
- Compensation and reward systems
- Planning processes
- Communication systems
- Decision-making approaches
- Organization, unit and individual goals
- Measurement systems
- The performance review process
- Strategies for attracting and retaining talent
- Competencies
- Core business processes and work flows
- Management practices
- The organization's mission, vision, and values statements
- Organizational structures
- Customer relations policies and practices
- Stakeholder relations policies and practices

## APPENDIX 36

### PROTOCOL: DESIGN POSSIBILITIES FRAMEWORK (COOPERRIDER & WATKINS)

Design Possibilities Framework	
<b>Purpose:</b> To create a design possibilities map from which the group selects the high-impact organization design elements that they feel are a priority.	<b>Participants:</b> Whole group  <b>Time:</b> 30 minutes  <b>Materials:</b> A large Blank Design Possibilities Map posted on the wall; markers; Examples of formal organization design elements;
<b>Instructions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The previously constructed Dream Statement is placed at the center of the design possibilities map.</li> <li>• The group brainstorms all the key relationships, both within and outside the organization that will impact or be impacted by the dream if accomplished. These are placed in the second circle of the map.</li> <li>• The group brainstorms all the formal organization design elements that will influence the accomplishment of the dream. The group will be provided with examples of formal organization design elements (Appendix 31). However, participants will be reminded to use categories and language that apply to them. These are written in the outer circle of the map.</li> <li>• The group selects the high-impact organization design elements that they feel are a priority and that they want to work on. It is important to balance individual passion and what is important for the whole community.</li> </ul>
<b>Summary and Member Check:</b>	Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review for accuracy and consensus on the organizational design elements that were selected.

## APPENDIX 37

### PROTOCOL: CRAFTING PROVOCATIVE PROPOSITIONS - DESIGN

Design Possibilities Framework	
<b>Purpose:</b> To craft provocative propositions for the selected design elements.	<b>Participants:</b> Whole group  <b>Time:</b> 30 minutes  <b>Materials:</b> Blank flipchart paper; markers;
<b>Instructions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce Provocative Propositions to the group with the following in mind:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ These are expansive statements of how to plan to organize in pursuit of the dreams;</li> <li>○ These are a set of principles and commitments about how people work together;</li> <li>○ These describe the ideal organization.</li> <li>○ They stretch the status quo, challenge common assumptions and suggest real opportunities for change.</li> <li>○ These are built on the positive core and grounded in real examples from the past.</li> <li>○ These are statements that bridge the best of “what is” with aspirations for “what could be”.</li> <li>○ These are meant to answer the question: What would our organization look like if it were designed to expand our positive potential and unleash higher levels of performance?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Group members write provocative propositions for the high-impact design elements that were selected. The group may choose what they feel is the best way to write these – either together collectively authoring each, or individually with a later review by the whole group. With either approach, it is suggested to use flipchart paper and to (1) brainstorm ideas; (2) then weave the ideas into sentences; and then (3) reflect and refine on what has been written. The group is reminded that good propositions meet the following guidelines:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is it provocative – does it challenge the status quo?</li> <li>○ Is it grounded – are there examples from the stories that</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>illustrate the ideas as a real possibility?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is it desired – would you and your organization really want it?</li> <li>○ Is it stated in affirmative and bold terms as if it is happening now?</li> </ul> <p>The final product is a combination of provocative propositions that serve as a statement from this group for suggesting future actions for the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● For each provocative proposition, group members are to detail school leadership practices required for support of the propositions.</li> <li>● Group members review the provocative propositions for accuracy and confirmation through member checking.</li> </ul>
<b>Summary and Member Check:</b>	<p>Before moving to the next activity, participants will be asked to review for accuracy and consensus of the provocative propositions that were written and consolidated into a final statement for suggested future actions.</p>

## APPENDIX 38

### PROTOCOL: CLOSURE OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY LEARNING TEAM PROCESS

Design Possibilities Framework	
<p><b>Purpose:</b> To summarize the work produced during the summit and to compare it with the themes and formative ideas of Appreciative Leadership. Additionally, to provide an opportunity for the participants to 'value' their summit experience.</p>	<p><b>Participants:</b> Whole group</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 45 minutes</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> Appreciative Leadership Themes, Principals, and Formative Ideas (Appendix 8); Previous work – Positive core, Dream Statement and article, Provocative Propositions; Flipchart, Valuation handouts; markers;</p>
<p><b>Instructions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The group will be facilitated in their review of the Define, Discovery, Dream and Design states of the AI Cycle. A review will be conducted of the key group-created documents with the group: positive leadership core, dream statement with accompanying article, and provocative propositions.</li> <li>• The group members will be asked to compare and contrast these group created documents with Appreciative Leadership Themes, Principles, and Ideas to identify which items produced by the Core Team are aligned with Appreciative Leadership. A list of similarities and contrasts will be generated on the flipchart from the suggestions and discussion of the group members.</li> <li>• Participants will be asked to complete individually the Valuation of Appreciative Inquiry Team Learning Summit (Appendix 35).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary and Member Check:</b></p>	<p>In closing, participants will be asked to review the list of similarities and contrasts for accuracy and consensus. In a round-the-room format, each participant will be given the opportunity to reflect on the stages of the AI Cycle and of the utility of the AI Learning Team Summit.</p>

## APPENDIX 39

### REFLECTION & VALUATION

Purpose: To reflect upon the process and product of the last two days of sharing stories, dialogue, and planning and to identify aspects of the AI Learning Team Process that are valuable. Please provide your honest feedback on this form.

NAME: (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

1. What about the Appreciative Inquiry strengths-based approach most enlivened you?

Thinking back on the last two days and moving forward, what:

2. Inspires you? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Surprises you? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Challenges you? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What aspects of the *AI Learning Team Process* have you found most valuable?

6. What wishes would you have to help make the next one even better?

## APPENDIX 40

### IDENTIFIED PATTERNS USED FOR THE TYPOLOGICAL PROCESS FOR RESEARCH

#### Question #1

	Schiller et al.	Whitney et al.
<b>I.</b>	<p>(Schiller #1) Leaders are belief-based with explicit spiritual orientation and practices;</p> <p>The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Values, Affirmation, Belief in fellows, Personal Spirituality – faith based and Personal Meaning Systems.</p>	<p>(Whitney #7) A positive world view;</p> <p>The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: A way to see the world, people and situations;</p> <p>To see the best in people; Treat with respect and dignity regardless of race, age, gender, etc.; and positive potential.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A belief in having a holist inclusive collaborative learning community (much like a team) that is creating something special and better together and that is empowering at the same time and is a belief in fellow human beings.</li> <li>2. A belief in empowering everyone to grow and be reflective learners in moving forward.</li> <li>3. A belief in ethical behavior in exercising values that are modeled and followed in making a difference.</li> <li>4. A spirituality that is not religiously faith based, yet life honoring, inspiring while being holistic and liberating in allowing energy to flow towards a desired synchronicity.</li> </ol>	
<b>II.</b>	<p>(Schiller #2) Leadership lives in the group, not in any one person;</p> <p>The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Team Leadership, Envision, and Collective Discovery.</p>	<p>(Whitney #6) It's about relational capacity;</p> <p>The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Confluence of relationships, People come together to make things happen, Bringing together strengths, resources, and capacities, and Collaborating to create/co-author.</p>
	<p>The figurative and literal 'center of the round table' serves as a device for the core administrative leadership team to gather at and come to terms of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Working together as a team towards a shared vision for the school and for the human good;</li> <li>2. Putting at the center of the table that which is best for student learning –which includes current issues and those ideas that are best practices for the proactive benefit of the school;</li> <li>3. Bringing to the table the actual stakeholders or the representation of various stakeholder interests/perspectives and in walking away from the table, having decided how to attend to those interests either through direct inclusion, communication or other actions;</li> <li>4. Engaging efficiently in problem solving as needed.</li> </ol>	
<b>III.</b>	<p>(Schiller #3) Multiple truths exist in ways of thinking, doing, and being.</p> <p>The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Multiple paths, Discovering alternatives, Customized solutions, and Question the status quo.</p>	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In their ways of thinking, doing and being, the CM Core Administrative Team modeled the valuing of multiple truths in the search for best practices and creative solutions in completion of their work that was disseminated relationally to others.</li> </ol>	



## Appendices

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The CM Core Administrative Team brought together stakeholder groups to look at school issues in a generative process that encouraged the sharing of multiple viewpoints, discovering of alternatives, and customizing solutions to fit the needs of the school.</li> <li>The CM Core Administrative Team promoted the use of reflective practices with stakeholders in the quest for self-improvement for the good of the individual, group and/or institution, rather than as a reaction to the need to resolve a problem.</li> </ol>		
IV.	<p>(Schiller #4) Appreciative Leaders have an unwavering commitment to bringing out the best in themselves and others;</p> <p>The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Appreciation, Encouragement, Validation, Appreciative dialogue, Challenge, Enable, Coach and Support people's best talents.</p>	<p>(Whitney #8) It turns potential into positive power;</p> <p>The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Positive core, Positive potential, turned into positive power to make meaningful contributions.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An attitude of challenging and supporting all stakeholders within the school community to be their best, regardless of position or function.</li> <li>An attitude of turning potential into positive power by being in charge of your own learning and empowered to make use of it along with your talents to work towards a better school and world.</li> </ol>	
V.	<p>(Schiller #5) Appreciative Leaders find generative forces in their many circumstances and multiple systems;</p> <p>The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Generative language and conversations, Creative approaches, Inspiring new ventures, Questioning and listening, 'Think out of the box', holistic connections, and Continual learning.</p>	<p>(Whitney #9) Sets positive ripples in motion;</p> <p>The key concepts/words to search for evidence are: Through words, actions, and relationship waves of positive change ripple outward in creating positive possibilities.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A spirit of inquiry was cultivated by 'bringing to the center of the table' issues for reflection, questioning, and dialogue in inspiring action through a united team effort.</li> <li>Action efforts played forward to benefit the learner, school, community, and betterment of the world holistically.</li> </ol>	

## APPENDIX 41

### PSEUDONYMS

MEMBERS	PSEUDONYMS
SM	Ixchel
MM	Chac
SS	Huna
AT	Yumil
AZ	Kinich

## APPENDIX 42

### CM HIGH POINT EVENTS DURING 2002-2008

#### – As Identified by the CM Core Administration Team

#### *Possible Ingredients to the Recipe – Not a Prescription, but perhaps Proof is in the Pudding?*

From the work completed in this research study I believe that there is neither a defined prescription nor a recipe for creating appreciative school leadership. I believe that by stakeholders (students, teachers, administrators, and parents) becoming acquainted with key concepts of Appreciative Leadership through the use of Appreciative Inquiry may lead to appreciative contextual practices in schools.

The following is a detailed account of the High Point Events that the CM Core Administrative Team identified during their term of working together from 2002 to 2008. They serve as evidence of Appreciative Leadership in action as each piece was initially brought to the round table during the weekly meeting and put at the center for discussion – where questions abounded in prompting answers and courses of consequent action.

High Point Events	What were they?	How did they come to pass?	How were they received?	What benefits were accrued for doing these things?
Crisis Management Plan developed	The Crisis Management Plan was a written set of procedures developed for emergency situations the school might face (fire, earthquake, bombs, etc.) and which were shared with the community and practiced. Includes are recommended actions during the emergency and in follow-up steps.	In a proactive step, the idea was brought to the table for discussion as a perceived need within our community. A member of the Core Team brought the initial idea to the table in response to follow up steps to a recent emergency situation in the school. Drafts were created and shared with the stakeholders for feedback, including the feedback from practice of the procedures.	The students, teachers, staff and parents appreciated the proactive work and were glad to participate in the drafting of the procedures as it required the critical eyes of many to fine tune the practices.	A sense of security comes from knowing what to do in being prepared. Additionally, the use of a feedback cycle allowed for the valuing of voices and validated the exchange of communication between various stakeholder groups.

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<b>High Point Events</b>	<b>What were they?</b>	<b>How did they come to pass?</b>	<b>How were they received?</b>	<b>What benefits were accrued for doing these things?</b>
<b>Talents Unlimited Training</b>	Talents Unlimited is a staff development program designed to empower teachers to identify and nurture the multiple thought process talents of <b>all</b> students. This approach enhances the learning process. The program highlights the Productive Thinking, Communication, Planning, Forecasting, Decision Making, and Academic talents.	A suggestion to empower students and teachers in active learning – as this was one of the areas identified for school improvement. Initial training was provided for the whole faculty with more in-depth training and support provided for elementary teachers and the Spanish program.	Students and teachers made successful use of the program and its application to classroom learning. The Spanish program used it extensively with faculty members presenting at the national USA conference. Several teachers became trainers of the program so as to continue to train teachers in-house as well as to train local school teachers.	Teachers and students acknowledged the increased attention to the process and meta-cognition talents and their application in active learning exercises.
<b>ESL in the Mainstream Training</b>	This professional development course for teachers was provided to meet the needs of English as a Second Language (ESL) students in all content areas and grade levels in the school.	In multiple levels of professional conversations throughout the school it was determined that due to the high percentage of the student population being ESL students, that attention was needed in providing the necessary scaffolding of skills to these students in all of their classes, not just in English and ESL – thereby requiring all teachers to be cognizant and able to attend to the student needs.	As teachers voiced their opinions and saw the need for such a service and the potential benefit in student learning, then they were on-board with it. They were able to determine their own specific strategy for using the material. They appreciated the support that was given in the financing and scheduling of the course.	The benefits were seen in the attention to the building of the English language skills across the curriculum. Teachers enjoyed the professional development benefits.

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<b>High Point Events</b>	<b>What were they?</b>	<b>How did they come to pass?</b>	<b>How were they received?</b>	<b>What benefits were accrued for doing these things?</b>
School Profiles created	A profile of expectations for the school's graduates, teachers, administrators, parents and school board members were created.	Questions amongst the Core Leadership Team members were asked about what expectations were for each stakeholder group and the way that everyone would know what was expected in support of student learning (academic performance and behaviors). Special interest groups created drafts of the profiles and shared them with the respective stakeholder groups for feedback.	The graduate profile was received well and sparked a lot of productive discussion about the mechanisms and alignment of student learning. The teacher profile was set as an instrument for evaluation. The administrator profiles were used for evaluation and soliciting performance feedback. The parent and school board profiles were used sparingly in terms of accountability.	Professional expectations were set and met in the promotion of practices that benefit student learning. Platforms for discussions were opened up to stakeholders.
"Catch the Spirit" slogan developed	A slogan was created in order to promote the specialness of the school.	In a time of attention to marketing and fluctuating enrollment, the Core Team decided to solicit the school community to help solidify its identity in the creation of the slogan. Input was solicited and considered from all stakeholder groups in the selection of the final slogan.	School community members embraced with pride the slogan as it embodied the active student learning at the school.	The exercise strengthened the communication and ties amongst the stakeholders and consolidated belief and support for the work of the school.

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<b>High Point Events</b>	<b>What were they?</b>	<b>How did they come to pass?</b>	<b>How were they received?</b>	<b>What benefits were accrued for doing these things?</b>
Safe Passage Community Service relationship started	A whole school community service connection was made with Safe Passage to support them in their work. Safe Passage is a project that works with the families that work in the city dump to improve their quality of living through education.	A member of the Core Team brought to the table the idea of a full school commitment to community service – students, faculty, staff, and parents. As the idea was shared with them, each group decided the form of support that they would be able to participate in. This included fund raising, 1 to 1 connections, special events, and professional development for the Safe Passage staff.	The project was very well received by all. Members of each group wished to be able to participate more - time/resources permitting.	For the CM community, members commented that it was important to learn about the realities and challenges that people in the Safe Passage program faced and for them to make an effort to help make a difference.
School Values identified	Values for the school community to embrace and live by were identified: Friendship, Respect, Sharing, Integrity, Diversity, Individuality, Growth, Trust, Unity, and Honesty.	In an effort to unite the stakeholders in sharing a common view of values, a multi-step process was used for soliciting suggestions and feedback in order to arrive at the final selection.	A consensus was achieved and the identified values were implemented into school activities. Parents feel assured that these values are being attended to.	The process of selection served to unite the stakeholders and provide an opportunity for constructive communication. The resulting product has been used to reinforce school culture and behavior.
Hunger Banquet held	An Oxfam America Hunger Banquet was held where participants have a meal according to the level of poverty/privilege that they are assigned which portrays the world's population.	Ideas from students and teachers initiated the planning of this event which was supported and carried out by all involved.	Everyone was touched by the event – including parents who commented upon their at home dinner conversations with their children concerning the world food-hunger situation.	Awareness was raised about the way people think about poverty and hunger. This event in its inclusion of local staff promoted students' understanding of their current realities as sometimes the only thing available to eat are tortillas and water. The school's culture of awareness and attention to diversity and the less fortunate was accentuated.

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<b>High Point Events</b>	<b>What were they?</b>	<b>How did they come to pass?</b>	<b>How were they received?</b>	<b>What benefits were accrued for doing these things?</b>
Tecpan School Improvement Plan developed	The school's first 5 year School Improvement Plan was created from a weekend retreat.	Students, teachers, administrators, parents, and board members came together to brainstorm and create the school improvement plan. Subsequent committee work with participation of the various stakeholders detailed the specifics of the plan and monitored its process.	As open invitations were extended to all in the community, the reception was excellent. Various drafts of the plan were shared for stakeholder feedback as was the periodic reporting of progress.	Advances were made in the school's attention to the areas identified for school improvement: Active Learning, Social Values & Diversity, Creating Curriculum Connections, Assessment, Reading, and Communication.
Annual Leadership Saturday event is begun	An annual event was begun where students (grades 3-12) that had been elected to school leadership positions (and those that were not but also interested in the theme of the event) came together to (1) learn more about leadership – tools for their leadership toolbox; and (2) practice their leadership through interactive activities.	As part of the school vision and graduate profile that were formed, it was decided to support the formation of student leaders.	The annual event is typically attended by 99% of the student leaders. They actively suggest themes for focus. Teachers, students and administrators participate in the planning and running of the event.	Students and teachers continue to accrue tools in their leadership toolbox. This event provides an on-going platform for discussions about leadership. Specific application is made to class and community service projects. A leadership conference for students of Central American schools is held.
"I love to read" Month is initiated	A month during the school year was dedicated to the promotion and celebration of reading for students at all levels.	From the school improvement plan this was one of the activities that was suggested and enacted. Students, teachers and parents became actively involved in the organization and holding of this annual event.	The activity continues and receives full support from the community.	Thematic books have been chosen to emphasize key life learning concepts – such as taking care of the environment and been used in activities that integrated students of various grade levels. School wide reads were promoted. Student interest for reading and reflection has been cultivated. Visiting authors promote reading.

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<b>High Point Events</b>	<b>What were they?</b>	<b>How did they come to pass?</b>	<b>How were they received?</b>	<b>What benefits were accrued for doing these things?</b>
Star Student Assemblies are held	A monthly assembly for elementary students where they were recognized for their star-like qualities in the demonstration of their multiple intelligences and/or school values.	In discussions about the promotion and celebration of learning, this idea came up and teachers supported the idea – as every student during the year is recognized and valued individually specific to them.	Students enjoy it in receiving the awards and celebrating classmates' successes. Parents love the idea. Teachers recognize the value of the activity.	Students are mindful of their performances – academically and behaviorally, resulting in an effective learning culture.
Programs developed for maintenance staff – Employee of the Month, Employee own savings and loan bank set up, Scholarship program for their children	The local maintenance staff received benefits and recognition that they had not previously received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognition and appreciation for work well done;</li> <li>- A seeded saving and loan program;</li> <li>- Scholarships for their children to complete their studies at the various grade levels.</li> </ul>	Recognized need by the school administration led to the creation of these initiatives. In the case of the savings and loan program, employees were taught to run the program.	The maintenance staff very much appreciated the initiatives. Students raise money to contribute to the scholarship fund and to pay for school supplies for the children.	A sense of family and helping out is cultivated. Maintenance workers are not seen as solely maids and janitors. A sense of acting locally is also sown.
Anchor Papers and Student Writing Portfolios begun	Twice a year, students are given a writing prompt and asked to respond in providing a sample of their writing. The prompts are relevant to the student's world. These and student selected pieces of writing during the year are stored in individual showcase writing portfolios.	In discussions about assessment, active learning, and writing amongst teachers and administration, the idea was sprung to create individual showcase writing portfolios that could be used to demonstrate and chronicle student learning.	At the beginning, there was reluctance by the students and the teachers to participate, but as this became a ritual event, with the results shared with parents, more buy-in was achieved.	In addition to students using this to monitor development, teachers used this exercise to reach agreement regarding writing expectations. Also, the results were used by curriculum committees as data to inform their programmatic efforts.



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<b>High Point Events</b>	<b>What were they?</b>	<b>How did they come to pass?</b>	<b>How were they received?</b>	<b>What benefits were accrued for doing these things?</b>
Understanding by Design (UbD) is introduced to faculty	UbD is a curriculum development framework that promotes the optimal planning of connected and meaningful student learning.	Discussions were held in regarding efforts to address improved student learning efforts – especially in considering the pieces from the school improvement plan: active learning, assessment, & curriculum connections. Teachers received training and support in developing UbD unit plans. The use of ‘Backwards by Design’ planning, authentic assessments, essential questions and enduring understandings were to the faculty.	Initially, faculty were unsure of the fit and requirement upon their time. However, with professional development and coaching, teachers were proud of their work.	The benefits included an accountable curriculum, specific and focused student learning, and teacher professional development.
Atlas Curriculum Mapping is implemented	This is an electronic program that allows for the input of UbD unit plans and for accessing curriculum data (learning content & skills, activities, assessments, resources)	As part of the discussion associated with UbD and school improvement initiatives, Atlas was chosen to accompany the efforts. Teachers received training and support.	Initially, faculty were unsure of the fit and requirement upon their time. However, with professional development and coaching, teachers were proud of their work.	The benefits included an accountable curriculum which could be easily accessed by teachers and administration for clarity of the school curricula. The school was a pioneer in coupling UbD and Atlas.
Senior Portfolio Presentations begun	During their senior year, students are asked to prepare a portfolio of themselves as a learner. At the end of the year, they reflect upon this and present their work to the school community.	Discussions from school improvement – assessment, active learning, curriculum, and assessment converged with the work of the graduate profile. A process for development of the portfolio and presentation involved students and teachers.	Members of the community recognized the value of the exercise and celebrate the seniors and their learning in the presentations.	Senior Reflection Essays were used in the college application process. A culture of reflection and appreciation was encouraged as students shared their thoughts publicly. Younger students learn about the process from witnessing the presentations.

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High Point Events	What were they?	How did they come to pass?	How were they received?	What benefits were accrued for doing these things?
Vision Statement created	The first ever vision statement for the school was created: <i>A community where active learners seek excellence, value diversity, and find their voice to become leaders for a more peaceful world.</i>	In questioning the true north of the school, it was recognized that the school did not have a vision to follow. Members of all stakeholder groups convened to create the vision statement.	As repeated drafts were shared with the full school community, members felt involved and a part of the process.	A hugely provocative proposition was created for following. People felt proud of their efforts and school. Communication was exemplary.
Wellness School-wide theme is incorporated throughout the year	School wide themes were created each year – for secondary learning attention. Examples included Diversity, Wellness, The Mayans, Earth Day Every Day, Everyone is a leader.	In support of the school vision, school improvement work, and timely issues, students and faculty decided upon the yearly themes. Committees of interested students and faculty organized events throughout the year for the community, inside and outside the classroom.	As the themes were supported with interesting and active events for the whole community – students, faculty, staff and parents, involvement was high.	The school wide theme events served to bring the school community together. Annual events such as celebration of International Peace Day are continued. Ecological awareness was cultivated as was information about the Mayas as a Mayan Calendar, Ball court and Ceiba tree were installed on campus.
Use of SMART Goals implemented	Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Timely Goals to improve performance were used throughout the school.	The Core Leadership Team about SMART Goals led to their implementation. Students and teachers were trained in their use for personal and academic goal setting.	Students at first did not like the idea of setting measurable goals, but later could see their benefits.	Improved focus and performance for students and teachers in attention to their department and curricular SMART goals.
First Aid & CPR Courses offered to all employees–	First Aid and CPR competency expected of the faculty and staff	As the Crisis Management Plan was developed and students were involved in more active learning activities, teachers were trained in First Aid and CPR.	Teachers were at first reluctant to give up time, but were later appreciative of the training and utility.	Teachers were better prepared for emergency care – especially after staff member had an onsite electrocution accident and the First Aid training was used.

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<b>High Point Events</b>	<b>What were they?</b>	<b>How did they come to pass?</b>	<b>How were they received?</b>	<b>What benefits were accrued for doing these things?</b>
<b>3 Minute Walk-throughs initiated</b>	Principals visit classrooms as part of their supervision. Narrative records are kept for follow-up discussions with the teachers regarding what was observed as related to student learning.	As a shared book read for Core Leadership team members, the group examined the idea and modified it to fit the circumstances.	Teachers felt non-threatened and were open to engaging in dialogue focused on them and improved student learning.	Teachers felt supported and there was healthy communication. The principals presented their work with this at a regional conference where it was well received.
<b>Principles Training Institute attended and completed</b>	The Principles Training Institute offers a continuing education certificate for international school administrators.	In support of being the best that one can be, the principles received support to attend what was considered at the time the best professional development for them.	The principals found the experience very challenging and rewarding – as well as gratifying to see that they were performing on par or above with their peers.	Ideas and practices were brought back and shared with the school community at various levels – students, teachers, parents.
<b>Let's Get Real</b>	This is an Anti-bullying program for students in grades 5-12.	In searching out best practices, a member of the Core Team suggested this program for reinforcement of anti-bullying within the school. The program is presented through a sharing of a video and followed up with small group conversations.	As all of the students and teachers viewed this video, as well as interested parents – people were interested to discuss the topic and while there was agreement that bullying was not an issue at our school, it was something to be aware of.	Community-wide awareness was increased as well as attention to the topic.
<b>An Inconvenient Truth</b>	This is a documentary film about former Al Gore's campaign to educate citizens about global warming via a comprehensive slide show.	Student and teacher interest in the topic of global warming prompted the public showing of this film to the school community.	The film empowered the efforts of students in paying attention to ecological practices.	A school-wide theme of Earth Day Every Day was selected by the school community and related activities were undertaken by stakeholder groups which continue.

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High Point Events	What were they?	How did they come to pass?	How were they received?	What benefits were accrued for doing these things?
Professional Development Bank – Performance Evaluation	<p>Teachers may use \$500 per year for their own professional development activities.</p> <p>Teachers have the option to choose to complete a professional project instead of submitting to classroom observations for their performance evaluation.</p>	Discussions amongst teachers and administration led to the ideas of teachers being supported in their professional development and practices that would ultimately benefit the school and student learning.	This was a win-win situation for everyone.	The level of professional development and expertise increased along with teacher motivation. Student learning benefitted. The atmosphere of learning and professional collegiality was celebrated.
Multiple Intelligences supported	Howard Gardner's 8 Multiple Intelligences were embraced school-wide in believing that everyone is intelligent.	Best practice discussions from the sharing of thought-provoking ideas provided the birth and embracement of this idea.	Everyone in the school community, including staff, enjoyed this validation and celebration of intelligence.	The various intelligences were promoted and celebrated. Student learning benefitted as students were allowed to work within their preferred MI's.
Performing Arts Center	A new Performing Arts Center was built that included a theatre, art, music, and drama classrooms as well as gallery spaces.	From the attention to the multiple intelligences, the community determined that adequate facilities were needed. Though the school did not have initially have the money, it was raised through the efforts of many.	The project was strongly supported by all – especially as the students and teachers participated in various phases of the design.	The dedicated facility accentuated the arts within the school community. There is a sense of pride within the school regarding the facility and programming.
Best Practices - <i>en la van Guardia</i>	A culture of seeking Best Practices and being the best that you can be was promoted.	The perpetual question was always asked ... what is the best for student learning?	People embraced this question and were not afraid to engage in research and dialogue to find the best fit for student learning at our school. This happened amongst and across the various stakeholder groups.	A sense of life-long learning was cultivated in seeking excellence, in being an active and reflective learner.

High Point Events	What were they?	How did they come to pass?	How were they received?	What benefits were accrued for doing these things?
Community - Team Building	At the beginning of the school year, units of community building are included in all classes. Community building is included in professional development activities for faculty and staff.	In discussions of best practices, it was noted that investment in the creation of community empowers student learning on many levels and is a precursor for active learning.	Participants enjoy the dynamics of the activities and see the value in the building of community.	In the building of community, diversity, communication, trust, and leadership are all enhanced.